

MADE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE:  
MINISTRY FORMATION AND THE HOLISTIC REDEMPTIVE VISION OF  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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## CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vii
ABSTRACT .....	viii
THE PROBLEM AND SETTING .....	1
Statement of the Problem: Meaning of Redemption as Paradigm for Ministry Formation .....	1
Ministry Setting: Seeking a Theological Paradigm For Ministry Formation .....	3
The Historical Context: Influence of Modernity on the Church's Theological Paradigms .....	6
The Contemporary Context: Merging Conversations around a Biblical Paradigm for Ministry Formation .....	13
Thesis-Project and Its Relevance for Ministry Today .....	18
Guiding Assumptions and Key Terms of the Thesis-Project .....	19
THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	24
The Meaning of Redemption in the Old Testament .....	24
The Meaning of Redemption in the New Testament .....	34
The Kingdom of God and Redemption .....	37
Summary of the Biblical Paradigm of the Redemptive Reign of God .....	42
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	45
The Willimon-Hauerwas Model of Kingdom Ethics: <i>Living as Resident Aliens</i> .....	46

The Stassen-Gushee Model of Kingdom Ethics: <i>Transformative Agents of God's Reign</i>	60
Summary Evaluation of Models	74
Principles Revealed for Curriculum Development	75
PROJECT DESIGN	77
The Goal of the Curriculum	77
Description of Participants and Learning Environment	77
The Content of the Curriculum	79
The Framework of the Curriculum	100
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	104
Lessons learned from Test Group 1	104
Signs of Success	105
Areas to Improve	108
Taking a New Approach: Summative Evaluation	111
Outcomes of the Summative Evaluation	116
Analysis of Outcomes	116
Recommendations for Application and Future Study	120
Concluding Summary of Thesis-Project	122
APPENDIX A: EXEGETICAL CHART - REDEMPTION	125
APPENDIX B: CURRICULUM LESSON PLANS AND POWERPOINT SLIDES....	127
APPENDIX C: FINAL SUMMATIVE EVALUATION FORM	152
APPENDIX D: OUTCOMES OF SUMMATIVE EVALUATION	156

BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	162
--------------------	-----

VITA.....	167
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**FIGURES**

Figure 1: Practices for the Adventurous Christian.....	59
Figure 2: The Four Dimensions of Character .....	63
Figure 3: Three-fold Teaching Pattern.....	67
Figure 4: The Fourteen Sermon Triads - Stassen and Gushee.....	73
Figure 5: 'Map' of the Summative Evaluation .....	116

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## ABSTRACT

Building on the important work of professors Harv Powers and Rod Cooper in the area of Redemptive Leadership, this thesis-project seeks to clarify the biblical meaning of redemption and provide a model of discipleship that takes into account the full implications of participating in Christ's transformative work in the world. The goal of designing a holistic discipleship model is to enable Christians to understand more clearly, and to practice more intentionally, the true nature of God's reign which we have been called to witness and serve, which is the redemption of all creation.

The chapters build toward the development of a curriculum designed to offer every disciple a deeper biblical understanding of God's reign, a clear process of growth consistent with this holistic redemptive biblical vision, and a set of right practices to follow in each dimension of growth, regardless of the participant's particular sense of vocation. The results of the summative evaluation given at the end of the thesis-project reveals the impact the curriculum had on participants. By building the curriculum on two influential ethical models of character formation, participants were given the tools to identify ways of deepening their commitment to Christ, growing in their conviction of the kingdom of God, cultivating a more compassionate heart, and developing the kind of Christ-like character that would bear the fruit of the kingdom in their daily lives. The desired long-term outcome is to enable followers of Jesus to discern where their God-given passions intersect with the world's deepest hunger, for it is there where we find our most deepest sense of fulfillment.

## THE PROBLEM AND SETTING

### Statement of the Problem: Meaning of Redemption as Paradigm for Ministry Formation

While this study is focused on the issues of ministry formation, it is primarily concerned about the issues of *redemption* as it relates to this task. This thesis-project seeks to clarify the biblical meaning of redemption, and provide a model of discipleship that takes into account the full implications of participating in Christ's redemptive work in the world. Hopefully, at least in some small way, this thesis-project will contribute to the excellent work of Professors Harv Powers and Rod Cooper in the area of Redemptive Leadership. In terms of applying *redemptive* principles to the leadership developmental process, their work was original and evidently very effective. The course, however, did raise some unanswered questions. While the term redemption was used in relation to the process of forming individuals for ministry, how does it relate to the *goal* of ministry itself? Is the idea of redemption limited to issues of process, or does it have something to say about our actual mission and purpose as the church? How do we apply the term 'redemption' in various contexts, so we are consistent with its Scriptural meaning? Have we grasped the full implications of what it means to be *redemptive* leaders?

As I will discuss further in this chapter, these questions address a concern I have regarding the assumed meaning of this central theological theme in Scripture. While many definitions of leadership were studied, at no point was a deliberate attempt made to define redemption itself as a term. While distinct elements of the notion of redemption were implied throughout the course of study, there seemed a possibility that some crucial elements were not being taken into account, which could significantly change how the developmental process is approached. I hope, that by examining more closely the meaning of redemption in its biblical context, this could be taken into account when designing a process for ministry development. In fact, to assist in that work, the practical component of this research will be a curriculum that is designed around a comprehensive understanding of redemption; one that takes into account not

only its personal dimension but the social and, indeed, cosmic dimension as well. It is my hope that this clear articulation of a *holistic redemptive vision* for ministry,<sup>1</sup> which I will unpack through the succeeding chapters, will be regarded as a small but significant contribution to the original work already being done by professors Cooper and Powers in the field of ministry formation.

The goal of designing a holistic discipleship model is to enable Christians to understand more clearly, and to practice more intentionally, the true nature of God's reign which we have been called to witness and serve. It is an attempt to orient disciples, in practice, beyond the personal affect of experiencing the redemptive presence of Christ, and toward Christ's goal of the redemption of all creation. The chapters will build toward the presentation of a framework for a curriculum designed to offer every disciple a deeper biblical understanding of God's reign, a clear process of growth consistent with this holistic redemptive biblical vision, and a set of right practices to follow in each dimension of growth, regardless of the participant's particular sense of vocation. In the end, the hope is to see disciples become committed, compassionate, and discerning agents of God's transformative reign.

At this point, however, a more detailed background to this thesis-project would no doubt be helpful. In the first section I attempt to explain the origin of the thesis-project in the context of my own ministry setting, where I had been wrestling in different ways with how theological paradigms influence ministry formation. I then explore this issue in its historical context, examining the influence of modernity on the contemporary church's view of its mission. I focus on the challenge of reshaping the church's worldview, which seems to rely on centering our ministry formation once again on the gospel of the Kingdom, as Jesus himself did. I briefly outline the framework I am proposing for this task, including a few key guiding principles of kingdom ministry formation that I was able to identify through my research.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Professor Harv Powers for coining this term during a conversation during third year residency. Powers, Harv. Personal interview. May 2009.



### Ministry Setting: Seeking a Theological Paradigm For Ministry Formation

This thesis-project is a culmination of two questions that emerged roughly during the same time in my ministry a few years ago. On a personal level, I was feeling the need to develop stronger leadership skills. I eventually enrolled in the Redemptive Leadership Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The program proved to be the perfect fit for my needs, addressing all the areas of leadership I was hoping to grow in. The issue, however, of the biblical meaning of redemption was raised in the third year when the idea of the social dimension of the gospel was brought forward during a session. It was something I had been quietly wrestling with throughout the program. The discussion revealed a disparate range of views regarding the subject. Some were clearly not familiar with the notion of social redemption, others did not regard it as a priority for ministry, while one person was explicitly opposed to the idea.<sup>2</sup> It prompted me to reflect on some very basic questions for ministry; What *is* the gospel? Does Jesus show a priority of the spiritual over the temporal? What relation does social justice have to the ministry of evangelism? Was Jesus only interested in the salvation of souls, or was he interested in the redemption of creation as well?

As I reflected more on the reaction of my colleagues, I began to recognize an important principle to ministry formation; a *biblical* theology is as important as a clear process in

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<sup>2</sup> During this third residency the class was led in a discussion by a guest presenter, Jenny Morgan, on the 'Five Marks of Mission.' They were identified as the following:

- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth [*Bonds of Affection (Proceedings of ACC-6, Badagry, Nigeria 1984)*, Anglican Consultative Council, 1985. 49]

The class participants were then asked to identify which one of these marks he or she 'resonated' with the most. Of the thirteen participants in the class, the vast majority identified most closely with the first mark, proclamation. One resonated most with the mission of disciple-making, and one to the mission of loving service. Two participants resonated most strongly to the mission of transforming unjust social structures. None of the participants identified the mission of 'renewal of creation' as their passion or priority, and in fact one participant questioned its relevancy to the mission of the Church. (Morgan, Jenny. "Christian Leadership as Integration of Christ's Mission." Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Charlotte, NC. May 2009. Guest lecture.).

determining the outcome. I believe the professors attempted to address this during that particular session in the third year, but unintentionally revealed the extent to which the North American church (as much as we were representatives of it) are rather unclear about the biblical vision that shapes our ministry. I was left pondering some important questions; ‘What *was* the real goal of the Church’s mission I was developing skills to lead others toward? Was there not a larger vision Christ was calling us to ground our ministry in? How would that influence my sense of being in relation to the world around me? Would that vision open new areas of growth in my life I had not seen before? How was I to shape my practice of evangelism and discipleship according to that vision?

It felt to me that more time needed to be given to clarify this theological vision for ministry formation. There was simply something about our approach to the idea of redemption that seemed to be inconsistent with the kind of vision Jesus used to shape his own ministry.<sup>3</sup> In developing our own vision for ministry leadership, seeking spiritual transformation in ourselves and others is not enough - as important as that is. God’s vision was to bring the *whole* world unto himself – *all* of creation was included in God’s plan of salvation!<sup>4</sup> But this vision is not consistently lived out in the contemporary North American church. Much of society does not regard the Church as being particularly relevant to the needs of the world – and in fact is seen as a cause of some of the major problems.<sup>5</sup> Within the church, I know from my own experience many pastors struggle amidst the increasing marginalisation of the church, carrying a deep sense of inadequacy regarding the lack of impact through our ministries. Our message does not seem to capture the imagination of society, or our discipleship does not seem to be able to sustain our

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:18-19.

<sup>4</sup> John 3:16-17.

<sup>5</sup> For helpful reflection on anecdotal evidence, see Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. Print. For statistical research on the issue, see, “Surprisingly Few Adults Outside of Christianity Have Positive Views of Christians.” Ventura: The Barna Group, Ltd., 3 Dec. 2002. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/86-surprisingly-few-adults-outside-of-christianity-have-positive-views-of-christians>. Web. 15 August 2010.

efforts to live it out daily. Interestingly enough, all the questions being raised during the redemptive leadership program were becoming the same issues I was starting to wrestle with at the level of my own ministry.

During the last three years of my ministry at Trinity Church, Mississauga, I was director of discipleship ministries. This included overseeing the small groups, mentoring programs, biblical and theological courses for early and advanced learners, as well as sharing the preaching ministry. Soon after I stepped into the role, I made a plan to conduct an evaluation of all the ministries. In preparing for this evaluation, I decided I first needed to study how Jesus measured his disciples in terms of their spiritual growth. I figured that using Jesus' benchmarks for discipleship would be a good way to measure the effectiveness of our own ministries.

I did not read past the first portion of the gospel of Matthew before I was struck by two things. First, the way Jesus described discipleship during his Sermon on the Mount was dramatically different than what discipleship looked like in our suburban congregation.<sup>6</sup> Second, looking at the gospel again, it struck me how clear Jesus was regarding the goal of discipleship; "seek first the Kingdom."<sup>7</sup> Everything else in life, claimed Jesus, was secondary to this one vocation. In fact, the Kingdom was the reason Jesus came.<sup>8</sup> I realised that for the next year I needed to do far more studying and teaching on the kingdom of God. I ended up leading a two-part series on the subject; the first four sessions entitled, 'The Good News of the Kingdom' and the second set of sessions called 'Living the Kingdom'. They were primarily biblical studies on Jesus' kingdom parables in the synoptic gospels. At the conclusion of these courses, however, I was not satisfied with the outcome of the participants' learning. I did not recognize a significant shift in their thinking, or life patterns, over the course of that year. It appeared that the courses

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:3-7:28.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 6:33.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 4:17, 23; Luke 4:43.

may have introduced new information to them, but had not enabled real transformation. I needed to find a different starting point.

It was not long before I began to see that this starting point was the place where the different streams of conversation I was having at the time intersected. In the redemptive leadership program with cohorts gathered around a seminary table in the American southeast, I found myself in a conversation about how one develops a ‘holistic redemptive vision’ for ministry. Meanwhile, in my conversation about ministry in suburban Toronto, I was pondering how to effectively lead a congregation in seeking the kingdom as Jesus called us to do. Then the thought occurred to me, *could one be the answer to the other?*

The redemptive leadership model had revealed an effective *process of transformation* inherent in the concept of redemption itself. At the same time, Jesus’ vision of the kingdom of God set a very clear *goal* for any transformational process. Combining the two insights seemed to create a very effective pedagogical framework for discipleship. My thought was to develop a discipleship model whose framework would be based on the principles of redemptive formation, while the content of the curriculum would be oriented toward fulfilling the call to proclaim the Kingdom. This seemed like a great project to further my learning from the doctor of ministry program while at the same time addressing an important issue in my ministry context.

### **The Historical Context: Influence of Modernity on the Church’s Theological Paradigms**

In seeking to clarify the biblical meaning of redemption and develop a holistic model of discipleship, I came across a book written by Alan Hirsch entitled, *The Forgotten Ways*, which provided significant insights into the problems relating to the church’s current theological paradigms. Hirsch was convincing in his argument that the basic problem of the North American church is that we ask theological questions in the wrong order. We begin with the question, ‘What is the church?’, which is then almost always followed by, ‘What is the church’s mission?’, which only then is (and not always) followed by, ‘Who is Jesus?’. Hirsch insightfully pointed out that

the New Testament process of doing theology is, in fact, the opposite. The ministry of the early church was influenced by the one fundamental question, 'who is Jesus?' It was this question that inspired the church to follow Jesus, for reflection on their lived memory and experience of him confirmed time and again that he was the Christ, the crucified and risen Lord of the universe. And, in following the risen Lord in His mission, the church was defined by this life of service and love. Today, however, Hirsch argues that the mission is largely shaped by the church, and Jesus shaped to fit the church's mission. The effect of this misguided theological process is a continual turning back to the church's own cultural agenda. Under the constant influence of this cultural agenda, Jesus' theological agenda of the kingdom of God becomes lost.<sup>9</sup>

In his book, *Announcing the Reign of God*, Mortimer Arias addresses this strange absence of the notion of the kingdom of God in current theology. While his comment below is long, it is worth repeating in its entirety, as it captures clearly the fundamental cause of the problem:

C. Peter Wagner, Professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary and prolific author on this movement, has an interesting suggestion about this question, coming from his personal experience and from his intimate knowledge of the conservative evangelical churches in the United States and abroad. He candidly confesses that he has never preached a sermon on the kingdom of God, and he does not recollect hearing a sermon on the subject. Trying to respond to the question 'where has the kingdom been' for the evangelicals all these years, he begins by telling us that in 1950, when he became a Christian, he identified himself with the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, which at the time was 'engaged in a serious theological warfare...against liberalism, against post-millennialism, against evolution, against Freudian psychology, against naturalism, against humanism – all of which could be more or less summed up in the term 'the social gospel'. Wagner believes that since Walter Rauschenbusch, 'the principal advocate' of the social gospel, had 'used the kingdom of God motif as the major integrating element of his theological development', this made it unpalatable to evangelical minds and ears. He concludes: 'By association, then, the kingdom of God became an enemy of evangelicals. Feelings were so strong that some went to the extreme of opposing any sort of Christian activity designed to heal the hurts of society.' Wagner also blames dispensationalism and the second-coming charts, which put the kingdom totally in the future with little bearing on life today, as another misuse of the kingdom of

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<sup>9</sup> Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways*. Ada: Brazos Press, 2009. 142-144. Print.

God idea. The result has been that ‘evangelicals during most of the twentieth century chose to concentrate largely on soul saving.’<sup>10</sup>

Other scholars also identify the issue as being the dichotomy modernist theology has created between God’s public rule and personal salvation. As one group writes; “The church has tended to separate the news of the reign of God from God’s provision for humanity’s salvation. This separation has made salvation a private event by dividing ‘my personal salvation’ from the advent of God’s healing reign over all the world.”<sup>11</sup> Brian McLaren recounts a moment when he was confronted by this dichotomy when visiting Burundi one decade after the genocide that devastated that whole region of east Africa. Claude, the local pastor who invited him to speak to a group of young leaders, introduced the day conference by explaining that during his whole life as a Christian growing up in church he had only heard one sermon; “You are a sinner and you are going to hell. You need to repent and believe in Jesus. Jesus might come back today, and if he does and you are not ready, you will burn forever in hell.” Then, McLaren recounts, his host Claude became very serious:

So much death, so much hatred and mistrust between tribes, so much poverty, suffering, corruption, and injustice, and nothing ever really changed. Eventually I realized something. I have never heard a sermon that addressed these realities...over the years, I have come to realize that something is wrong with the way we understand Jesus and the good news. Something is missing in the version of the Christian religion we received from the missionaries, which is the message we now preach ourselves. They told us how to go to heaven. But they left out an important detail. They didn’t tell us how the will of God could be done on earth. We need to learn what the message of Jesus says to our situation here in East Africa.<sup>12</sup>

McLaren also shares insights from an HIV/AIDS worker in South Africa, himself a Christian, who at a pastor’s meeting he attended, openly criticised church leaders for being

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<sup>10</sup> Arias, Mortimer. *Announcing the Reign of God*. Lima: Academic Renewal Press, 1984. 124. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Guder, Darrell and Lois Barrett. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. 95. Print.

<sup>12</sup> McLaren, Brian. *Everything Must Change*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007. 18-19, 20. Print.

“preoccupied with three things, and three things only”: 1) miraculous healing, 2) need to be born again, and 3) tithing as ‘sowing financial seed’.<sup>13</sup> After several minutes of intense debate, the young community worker exclaimed; “I love God. I love Jesus. That’s why I’m in Khayelitsha trying to help and serve. But I can’t stomach what goes on there in the name of God. I see what’s going on – all the shouting and singing and raising money – and I know: this is not what Jesus intended. By talking only about individuals being born again, they keep Khayelitsha and our whole nation from being born again in a fuller sense of the term.”<sup>14</sup> This led McLaren to recognize that; “...even the religion we are committed to and in which we have found God and purpose and meaning and truth, can become captive to a colossal distortion. It can become a benign and passive chaplaincy to a failing and dysfunctional culture, the religious public relations department for an inadequate and destructive ideology.”<sup>15</sup>

As a scholar of Christian ethics, Dennis Hollinger surveys the bleak track record of the modern church and finds himself asking, ‘How did we end up in such a state?’ In search of an answer, Hollinger turns to a fellow noted ethicist, Alasdair MacIntyre, who claims the ‘main culprit’ for the moral vacuity of Protestant ethics is “modern liberalism with its appeals to the autonomous, rational self, abstracted from living histories, as evidenced in the Enlightenment, Protestantism, Kant, liberal democracies, modernist theologies, and a host of other movements and ideologies.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, MacIntyre argues that the theological ‘blind spot’ that allowed modern culture’s rationalistic ethic to take root in Protestantism was, ironically, the very pillar upon which it was based. Hollinger offers this following explanation:

[MacIntyre] believes that the Reformation’s emphasis on justification by faith left the moral agent alone before God...Protestantism rejected the notion of telos, or the person’s

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<sup>13</sup> McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, 26-27.

<sup>14</sup> McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, 28-29.

<sup>15</sup> McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Ada: Baker Academic, 2002. 51. Print.

natural end, by focusing on moral laws and principles and thus essentially paved the way for secular deontological ethics. It lost the sense of moral character...with its emphasis on moral actions, but the actions themselves counted for little in the Christian life....Protestant teachings had the effect of sanctioning 'the autonomy of secular activity' and thus handed the secular world over 'to its own devices.'<sup>17</sup>

In other words, what MacIntyre is pointing to is the influence of modern moral philosophy on Protestantism that shaped a passive view of the human moral will, which in turn fed into a 'spiritual laissez-faire' attitude toward the world. It is as if to finally say, 'The world is now God's problem.' Modern Protestantism came to espouse a theological view that saw no real purpose in faith beyond salvation, since salvation after all is justified by 'faith alone'. Any moral issues beyond our own salvation, such as what would be described today as social justice or environmental issues, is simply not an essential part to the working out of our faith.<sup>18</sup> Those issues pertained to 'civilisation,' which it was already becoming apparent God had ordained to be ordered through the offices of empirical rulers and the means of rational sciences such as medicine, economy, philosophy, and education.<sup>19</sup>

At this point, two significant strands in modern western Christianity began to emerge. On the one hand, over the decades, with this apparent ability of the forces of modernity to move civilisation to untold heights, missiologist David Bosch states that "...belief in Christ's return on the clouds was superseded by the idea of God's kingdom in this world, which would be introduced step by step through successful labours in missionary endeavour abroad and through creating an egalitarian society at home."<sup>20</sup> Early proponents of this view sparked a Social Gospel movement, which "perceived God's kingdom as a present ethical reality rather than a dominion to be introduced in the future." Bosch goes on to note that; "in 1870, Samuel Harris of Andover

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<sup>17</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 51-52.

<sup>18</sup> For a particular insight on this issue, see Skye Jethani's "Tim Keller on Justification and Justice." Out of Ur. Conversations for Ministry Leaders. 28 April 2010. [http://www.outofur.com/archives/2010/04/tim\\_keller\\_on\\_j.html](http://www.outofur.com/archives/2010/04/tim_keller_on_j.html). Web. 20 May 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991. 269. Print.

<sup>20</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 321.



Theological Seminary delivered a series of lectures characteristically entitled *The Kingdom of God on Earth*, by which he meant the developments then taking place in North America.”<sup>21</sup>

This theology, in the end, would leave little room for the supernatural reality once central to the Christian view. It was now progress and science ‘heralding the advent of the kingdom of God.’ The vehicles of such remarkable progress, namely materialism and capitalism, were merely ‘blessed with Christian symbolism.’<sup>22</sup> Man had now, essentially, become god. It is understandable, then, why there would be such reaction within some circles of the Church that Wagner described in the quote earlier.

On the other hand, the Social Gospel movement was regarded by many Christians as yet another moral compromise of the church to culture. The effect of the social gospel movement was not a clarification of the gospel’s distinct moral vision, but a further blurring of the lines between God and human culture. This critical group reacted by entrenching themselves in the premillennial view of Christ’s return. Their agenda moved them beyond any real concern for this world, learning to tolerate injustice and corruption – in fact “to expect and even welcome them as signs of Christ’s imminent return.”<sup>23</sup>

The real casualty of this debate was seen in the mission field. While conservative premillennialist camps re-asserted their commitment to the salvation of souls from this corrupted world, so-called liberals pulled out of the mission enterprise almost entirely. This was in part due to the lack of perceived urgency for evangelism in the advent of worldly progress. But as Bosch explained it, it also had to do with a sense that human knowledge and compassion was sufficient for the world’s needs. Bosch reflects back and remarks that this “...terrible failure of nerve...in some circles has led to an almost complete paralysis and total withdrawal from any activity

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<sup>21</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 321.

<sup>22</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 283.

<sup>23</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 284.

traditionally associated with mission, in whatever form. Others are plunging themselves into projects which might just as well – and more efficiently – be undertaken by secular agencies.”<sup>24</sup>

For many people today, these details of the history of the modern Church are blurred in today’s setting. The tension, however, remains very much felt in pews across denominational lines. Sadly, the idea of the Kingdom of God still remains the victim of ideological debate. On the one hand, there are Christians who propagate a gospel of social transformation but, as Bosch alludes to, sadly do not reflect a commitment to pay the cost.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, there are Christians who display tremendous sacrifice for the work of individual conversion, for the salvation of individuals, but are reticent about making a similar commitment to issues of social justice.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, even in the contemporary church well-meaning Christians are still stuck in the shadows of modernity with regard to the true meaning of Jesus’ holistic redemptive vision for the world.

Mary Albert Darling, co-author of a recent book with Tony Campolo called, *The God of Intimacy and Action*, confesses to being influenced by a one-sided view the gospel in her early years of ministry. Early after her acceptance of Christ as a child, her mother took her to another church that might not preach so much ‘social gospel’. Joining Youth for Christ taught her ministry was primarily about conversion, to help other teens ‘pray the prayer.’ Because the main

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<sup>24</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> For an interesting commentary on this issue see Ann Walle, “People of faith reflect on the faith community’s cooperative work, at CWS forum.” *Church World Service*. Church World Service, 7 Nov. 2008. [http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6423&news\\_iv\\_ctrl=1361](http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6423&news_iv_ctrl=1361). Web. 8 Aug. 2009.

<sup>26</sup> A fascinating article was posted recently in the Wall Street Journal, on the recent controversy of teaching religion in Texas schools. Conservative Christian representatives objected to Cesar Chavez being taught as an ‘example of citizenship’ to 5<sup>th</sup> graders, because of his involvement in strikes and boycotts, while arguing that Billy Graham should be included on a list of ‘transformational leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ for the same grade level students - whose role in American race relations has been controversial; See Simon, Stephanie. “The Culture Wars’ New Front: U.S. History Classes in Texas.” *The Wall Street Journal*. 14 Jul. 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124753078523935615.html>. Web. 8 Aug. 2009.) and Cathy Lynn Grossman, “In Nixon tapes, Billy Graham refers to ‘synagogue of Satan.’” *USA Today*. Garnett Co. Inc. 24 Jun. 2009. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-06-24-graham-tapes\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-06-24-graham-tapes_N.htm). Web. 25 Aug. 2009.

concern of every Christian was their own salvation, she worked with an assumption that “preaching about social and legal reforms was not a mandatory part of the gospel of Jesus,” and that any work of a Christian outside of ensuring one’s salvation was at best ‘second-rate’ charity.<sup>27</sup>

In recent years, Rick Warren, one of the most influential evangelical leaders of this generation, was confronted with his own theological bias against any work that did not directly relate to the church’s primary task of personal salvation. After being sensitized to the AIDS pandemic by a visit to Rwanda, he found himself re-reading Scripture in an attempt to make sense of the reality of the issue. Darling shares this quote from Warren; “I found those 2 000 verses on the poor. How did I miss that? I went to Bible college, two seminaries, and I got a doctorate. How did I miss God’s compassion for the poor? I was not seeing all the purposes of God.”<sup>28</sup>

### **The Contemporary Context: Merging Conversations around a Biblical Paradigm for Ministry Formation**

The year 1974 marked a significant shift in the modern evangelical conscience as to the relationship between evangelism and ‘social concern’. Hollinger maps out the conversation’s direction after the seminal gathering of global evangelical leaders in Lausanne, Switzerland. Hollinger explains that, ten years later, three distinct but not mutually exclusive views had been developed out of the conference dialogue. The first view holds that social ‘activity’ is a result of evangelism. The second view puts forward the idea that social action can be a ‘bridge to evangelism’. Third, there was also a distinct view emerging among evangelicals that social concern and evangelism were partners in the church’s mission.<sup>29</sup> At that point in time, many

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<sup>27</sup> Campolo, Tony and Mary Albert Darling. *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice*. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass. 2007. 62. Print.

<sup>28</sup> Campolo and Darling, *The God of Intimacy and Action*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 260.

evangelicals recognized this was a very bold but equally necessary pronouncement. The cultural winds were moving quickly, and fundamentalism as a theological agenda in the Church was steadily becoming irrelevant to the deeper spiritual questions confronting a dramatically changing global society.

On the other side, the effects of a one-sided gospel can clearly be seen in the current crisis of many liberal Protestant churches. Their dramatic decline in attendance speaks of the reality that a church built on the presuppositions of the social gospel movement is not what makes the church any more vital or relevant to most people. The tendency, for instance, of liberal churches to see social justice as simply the ‘corrective’ of society is deeply problematic. Moral actions are reduced to edicts and petitions, which as John Howard Yoder pointed out, are rarely representative of its constituents’ true practices. This led Yoder to criticize most churches as being ‘dishonest’ in their moral views, and put forward the following maxim, which is an implicit indictment of many mainline churches in North America; “Only if she herself is demonstrably and ethically working on a given problem does the church have the right to speak to others. A racially segregated church has nothing to say to the state about integration.”<sup>30</sup>

Today, there is a slow awakening among liberal Protestants that the church is called to live as a countercultural witness *to* society, to take a stand for a kingdom whose very nature exists in tension with our human reality, and to relinquish the role of the church as chaplain to the modern state. This means a re-centering of our whole lives on the life and witness of Christ as the one in whom God ordained the kingdom to be made manifest. This calls for a deep repentance of abandoning Jesus as Lord, and recommitting ourselves as devoted servants of the Kingdom of God. Kenda Creasy Dean, associate professor of Youth, Church and Culture at Princeton

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<sup>30</sup> Yoder, John Howard. *The Christian Witness to the State*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Scottdale: Herald Press, 2002. 21. Print.

Theological Seminary, captures well this call to mainline churches on behalf of the emerging generation:

The adolescent quest for passion reveals a theological aneurysm in mainline Protestantism: We are facing a crisis of passion, a crisis that guts Christian theology of its very core, not to mention its lifeblood for adolescents. Teenagers are quick to point out the oxymoron in passionless Christianity, quick to smell the danger in suppressing their emotional range, quick to question faith that fails to register on the Richter scale, and quick to abandon a church that accommodates such paltry piety. Not only does a church without passion deform Christian theology, it inevitably extinguishes the fire behind Christian practice as well. In short, without passion, Christian faith collapses. And young people know it – which may be why most of them are not spending much time in church.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time another influential leader, Bill Hybels, discovered how difficult it is to actually shape the habits of modern-day Christians around Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God. In an assessment of the Willowcreek ministries published a few years ago under the title, *Reveal*, Hybels learned that their approach to discipleship and ministry over thirty years had not achieved significant life-changing results among most of their members. In the foreword of the published survey, Hybels confesses, "...when I heard these results, the pain of knowing was unbearable. Upon reflection, I realized that the pain of not knowing could be catastrophic."<sup>32</sup> What was the painful lesson Hybels and the Willowcreek church learned? Keith Myers provides the following analysis; "Their conclusion from the reports of their own people is that participation in church programming does not effect significant life change beyond conversion. They concluded that

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<sup>31</sup> Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. 7. Print.

<sup>32</sup> Hawkins, Greg and Cally Parkinson. *Reveal: Where Are You?* South Barrington: Willow Creek Resources, 2007. 4. Print.

teaching on the practice of the disciplines alone is not enough.”<sup>33</sup> Myers extends his analysis even further:

Most of the best-selling books by Christian authors on the Christian life reflect well-intentioned attempts at filling the transformation gap but actually contribute to a fragmented or double life by giving more head knowledge or formulas that don't bring life change... Without a vision for a new kind of life and the means to appropriate that life, our best intentions will just produce more of what we already have... There simply are no shortcuts and no promises of worldly success or avoidance of suffering in the gospel of the kingdom. Paul said that in this life we should be content with food and clothing and expect to suffer loss for Christ. He said these kinds of sufferings actually are the program God has ordained for our growth in character. They are the way to real life.<sup>34</sup>

There are a growing number of Christians, in the pulpit and the pews, working hard at fostering such a vision for discipleship today. Indeed, some observers have described this generation as the dawning of the ‘second Reformation’.<sup>35</sup> Richard Foster describes this period as the time of ‘bringing together streams of life that have been isolated from one another for a very long time.’<sup>36</sup> This holistic vision for discipleship has at its center, as Myers rightly points out, the cross of Christ, the most vital symbol of God’s redemptive presence in the world. That cross is the enduring sign of the victory of God’s kingdom of justice and righteousness over the evil and sin of this world. In order to reclaim the kingdom of God as the real goal of discipleship, we must liberate the church from the cultural trap of modernity that left us indifferent to the condition of the world, or depleted of the moral conviction to act for the redemption of creation with the kind of urgency the cross conveys.

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<sup>33</sup> Myers, Keith. “Whole-Life Transformation.” *The Kingdom Life*. Ed. Alan Andrews. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010. 145. Print.

<sup>34</sup> Myers, *The Kingdom Life*, 145-146.

<sup>35</sup> Beckham, William. *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Houston: Touch Publications, 1997. 19. Print. By way of illustration, in an interesting article published online, Rick Warren of Saddleback church comments; “I’m looking for a second reformation. The first reformation of the church 500 years ago was about beliefs. This one is going to be about behavior. The first one was about creeds. This one is going to be about deeds. It is not going to be about what does the church believe, but about what is the church doing.” See Warren, Rick. Interview by David Kuo. *Rick Warren’s Second Reformation*. *Beliefnet*. Belienet, n.d. <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2005/10/Rick-Warrens-Second-Reformation.aspx>. Web. 30 December 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Foster, Richard. *Streams of Living Water*. New York: HarperCollins, 1998. xv. Print.

The call for the Church today is to undergo what Rick Warren has coined, a 'reformation of deeds', which is an important balance to the pre-occupation of doctrine that dominated modern theology. There is an urgent need to reclaim the holistic vision of the early evangelical movement, and correct the neglect of the church in engaging both the social ills and the spiritual sickness of our day with a systematic approach.<sup>37</sup> The inequity in our global society continues to create environments of poverty and frustration, which breed spirits of unrest and cynicism - which in turn become the soil for Satan to plant the seeds of hatred and violence against fellow man. Roland Allen, the influential Anglican missionary and theologian at the turn of last century, stated it this way:

How can a man behave properly to his sick friend when he believes that he has a demon? How can the most lofty philosophic doctrines avail to produce the rectitude when trouble sends a man to pray to a devil? How can a man preserve a true devotion and a reverent attitude toward the Divine, when the divinities known to him are described as the basest of creatures? How can a man walk aright when he and all his world take it for granted that there is a class of men, and that class the most numerous class, which has no rights of any kind, to whom nothing can be wrong which their master says is right, who were designed and created solely to give service and amusement to their owners, whether by their life or by their death?<sup>38</sup>

Another factor for the lack of theological clarity around ministry formation today has to do with the influence of secular metaphors that shape the character and values of our religious institutions. Keith Myers points out, for instance, that the dominance of the business metaphor for church leaders reveals a well-intentioned but dangerous priority in their ministry to ensure, as Darrel Guder describes it, the "institutional extension and survival" of the organization. Claims Myers, "The growth of the organization becomes the mission rather than the spiritual growth of the people. And regardless of a church's size, this business metaphor shapes the expectations of

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<sup>37</sup> For a rather prophetic critique of today's predominant neo-liberal theology, see Seifert, Harvey. "Unrecognized Internal Threats to Liberal Churches." *Christian Century*. 31 Oct. 1979: 1057. Print.

<sup>38</sup> Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962. 36-37. Print.

congregations to prefer pastors who act more as managers and CEOs of entrepreneurial corporations than of churches.”<sup>39</sup> Myers contends that the underlying problem of moral malaise is really the growth of “...consumer Christianity, which flips the church’s mission from forming servants for service in the kingdom of God to managing and designing an organization that serves the needs of consumers of religious good and services, called ‘programs.’”<sup>40</sup>

### **Thesis-Project and Its Relevance for Ministry Today**

The question underlying all of this is; how do we clearly and effectively articulate a biblical paradigm for holistic ministry formation? In my own denomination, for instance, very little attention has been given to train contemporary leaders for this task. Dave Toyce, who is president of World Vision Canada and a member of my former congregation, would often comment to me that his greatest challenge leading a global relief organization is not raising money, but finding Christians who have both the capacity and the commitment to actually do the work. He believes a crucial task of the local church is training disciples who are equipped to be agents of the Kingdom.

As the recent Willowcreek study revealed, this remains a serious challenge for the next generation of Christians. Both the task of clarifying the vision of the kingdom of God for the church, as well as the task of forming Christian character for the redemptive work of the Kingdom, is today’s urgent work. The relevance of this thesis-project for ministry today has to do with the desperate need for Christians who have the right character to witness God’s love for creation and foster redemptive solutions for the issues facing our precarious global society. As an example, Bill Houston, a doctoral student of Gordon-Conwell from South Africa, argued that it has not been enough to simply train Christians in systematic theology when the relevance of the good news of Jesus is being most severely tested by the AIDS epidemic that is destroying

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<sup>39</sup> Myers, *The Kingdom Life*, 154.

<sup>40</sup> Myers, *The Kingdom Life*, 154.



innocent lives across the African continent.<sup>41</sup> Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God encompassed all dimensions of the reality of this world. Both the individual life, and the structures and systems that are responsible for sustaining life, are of deep concern to God.<sup>42</sup> It is my hope that this project contributes to this task.

## **Guiding Assumptions and Key Terms of the Thesis-Project**

### ***Guiding Assumptions***

To state again, this thesis-project seeks to clarify the biblical meaning of redemption, and provide a model of discipleship that takes into account the full implications of participating in Christ's redemptive work in the world. Behind this thesis-project there are some 'guiding' assumptions I will now highlight very simply. The first assumption is that true Christian formation is centered on the goal of participating more fully in the kingdom of God. As Willard contends, "Spiritual formation and discipleship are all about development of the life in the kingdom of God..."<sup>43</sup> and further on explains, "The kingdom of God becomes the texture and the energy of our spiritual formation in Christ."<sup>44</sup> The second guiding assumption is that the outcome of such formation are sustained, growing, and redemptive Christ followers who are grounded in a *holistic redemptive vision* for ministry. This assumption addresses the lack of clear biblical measurements of mature holistic growth I notice in most discipleship programs today. In later chapters the connection these characteristics have to Jesus' own teaching on discipleship will be explored more fully. For now, brief definitions for key terms in these guiding assumptions, as well as other aspects of this thesis-project, will now be offered.

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<sup>41</sup> Houston, William. *Theological Models of Biblical Holism with Reference to Theological Colleges in Africa*. Diss. Gordon-Conwell Seminary, 2008. Boston. 3. Print.

<sup>42</sup> Romans 8:19-23.

<sup>43</sup> Willard, Dallas. "The Gospel of the Kingdom and Spiritual Formation". *The Kingdom Life*. Ed. Alan Andrews. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010. 53. Print.

<sup>44</sup> Willard, *The Kingdom Life*, 56.

### ***Key Terms***

Since much of this thesis-project is about clarifying central themes related to ministry and discipleship, it is important at the outset to explain how these terms are being used. These are not intended to be definitive, but rather a way to simply clarify for the reader the meaning I am giving to each of them at this point in the study. The central concepts of redemption and the kingdom of God will be explored in much more detail in the following chapter, but here at least in glossary form the meaning of various terms can be referred to.

**Kingdom of God:** God's redemptive will being fully realized 'on earth as in heaven'. The reality of the Kingdom, suggests Dallas Willard, is *God in action*.<sup>45</sup> The kingdom can be realized through any means God chooses, and is not limited to the actions of the Church.

**Church:** A community, through its life and worship, that is intentionally cultivating the character of its members to fulfill its purpose, which is to be signs and servants of the Kingdom of God in the world for the sake of Christ

**Missional:** An adjective to describe the Church when it is clearly revealing a *posture* and *priority* for the task of incarnating the good news of the Kingdom of God. Alan Hirsch suggests that a 'missional church' is "a church that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the world"<sup>46</sup>

**Discipleship:** The whole process and method by which a person grows as a devoted seeker of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Following Jesus is the method of growth, and the act of seeking the Kingdom is itself the process of growth. For example, conversion is part of the discipleship process, just like 'spiritual formation' is a method of discipleship. As Mortimer Arias

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<sup>45</sup> Willard, *The Kingdom Life*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 285.

explains it, discipleship means to mark a person or community as being “...on the way, following Jesus, witnessing to the kingdom in every imaginable situation, in a process of constant conversion, until the day when the kingdom will come in its fullness and ‘God will be all in all’”.<sup>47</sup>

Spiritual formation: The means by which a person’s spirit is transformed by God in Christ. Alan Andrews points out that; “Spiritual formation is not the end itself but is always pursued through and focused on the advancement of the Kingdom.”<sup>48</sup>

Ethics: Ethics is the study of social behaviour in an attempt to establish moral norms and values to guide actions. I am also using ‘ethics’ as a term to describe the actual pattern, or framework, that is (or ought to be) guiding a distinct society or group, such as ‘Christian ethics’ or ‘corporate ethics’.

‘Kingdom’ Ethics: The ethical framework whereby the Christian community learns to live according to the moral vision and values of the Kingdom of God. The following essential features can be found in the detailed outline of kingdom ethics provided by Stassen and Gushee, who also describe it as ‘holistic character ethics’; holistic view of salvation, oriented toward virtues of public witness, Christ-centered.<sup>49</sup>

Holistic redemptive vision: A view of the gospel that includes the personal, interpersonal, and social/political dimensions of reality. This view stands in contrast to the modern dichotomy of soul/politics, sacred/secular, spiritual/material, faith/science. All aspects of life are interrelated,

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<sup>47</sup> Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God*, 114.

<sup>48</sup> Andrews, Alan. *The Kingdom of Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*. Colorado Springs: Navpress Pub Group, 2010. 20. Print.

<sup>49</sup> Stassen, Glen and David Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press. 2003. 487-491. Print.

and therefore of concern to God. Christian ministry reflects God's comprehensive love for all of life and creation, far beyond simply the salvation of souls to heaven.

Social Justice: Change in social structures, institutions, laws, and relationships that enable just and equitable treatment of all persons in society (and living creatures). While social justice never reflects the fullness of the Kingdom of God, nevertheless we “persist in bold confidence knowing that all acts of justice are signs of God's coming kingdom.”<sup>50</sup> Social transformation is a vital expression of the good news of God's strength over the ‘principalities and powers’ of this world.<sup>51</sup>

Redemption: More than social justice, the outcome of God's saving work in history. It is the full transformation and renewal of all things brought into the kingdom of God. Redemption is not only the outcome for persons who participate in salvation through Christ, but also for creation who ‘groans for the freedom of God's children’ (Rom 8.32) It is the goal of Christ's mission to see the fullness of God's glory in the redemption of all creation. Only until then is the mission of Christ fulfilled.

In the next chapter I will seek to provide a strong biblical case for this holistic vision of redemption. In the third chapter I offer a comparative analysis of two theological models, each developed by a team of well-known Christian ethicists, which appear to represent the idea of a holistic redemptive vision for ministry. The actual practice of ministry formation around Jesus' holistic redemptive vision is the focus of the practical component of this research. In chapter four, I apply the insights gained from the study of these models toward developing a design for a curriculum to be used in a local church setting on the topic. In the final chapter, an evaluation of

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<sup>50</sup> Dearborn, Tim. *Reflections on Advocacy and Justice*. Monrovia: World Vision International. 2009. 7. Print.

<sup>51</sup> Regarding the reality of ‘principalities and powers’ in society, see Campolo, Tony et al. *Revolution and Renewal*. Louisville: John Knox Press. 2000. 243-261. Print.

the project is given, along with concluding remarks regarding the contribution I see this thesis-project making toward the church's ministry in the future. At this point, though, the focus is on exploring the most vital themes for this project, redemption and the kingdom of God.

## THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will seek to clearly define the two foundational theological themes of this thesis-project; ‘redemption’ and ‘kingdom of God.’ I will be relying largely on exegetical tools to mine the meaning of these biblical terms. A quick survey reveals that the term ‘redemption’ is used in various contexts throughout Scripture. These situations will need to be looked at closely in order to fully appreciate how redemption informs our understanding of God’s purposes in history. On the other hand, as a term, ‘the kingdom of God’ is curiously absent in the Old Testament. Why is this the case? How then do we make a connection between Jesus’ use of ‘kingdom of God’ in the gospels, and the pervasive theme of redemption in the Old Testament? As suggested in the opening chapter, an important step in building a framework for ministry formation is determining the relation these terms have to one another. At the close of the chapter I will seek to provide a definition of the kingdom of God according to the overriding theme of redemption in Scripture. The last word in this chapter will be regarding the implications this has for the task of ministry formation.

### **The Meaning of Redemption in the Old Testament**

According to Strong’s Concordance, some form of the term ‘redemption’ is used one hundred forty-two times in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Of the total number, sixty-seven times the word is translated from the Hebrew ‘גָּאַל *gaal*’, which the Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon interprets to mean:

1 to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman. 1A (Qal). 1A1 to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer. 1A1A by marrying brother’s widow to beget a child for him, to redeem from slavery, to redeem land, to exact vengeance. 1A2 to redeem (by payment). 1A3 to redeem (with God as subject). 1A3A individuals from death. 1A3B Israel from Egyptian bondage. 1A3C Israel from exile. 1B (Niphal). 1B1 to redeem oneself. 1B2 to be redeemed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, J. (1996). *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Electronic edition. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers. 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance*.

There are forty-six instances where the word ‘redemption’ is translated from the Hebrew ‘פָּדָה padah’, which is interpreted by J. Sawnson to mean:

ransom, buy, i.e., to cause the freedom or release of a person from bondage or ownership, often implying a delivering or rescue of a person in distress (Ex 13:13; 2Sa 4:9), note: in some contexts the redemption has a special focus of salvation and relationship to the LORD as a person now owned by God...<sup>3</sup>

The contexts in which the terms are predominantly used in the Old Testament are quite revealing. Of the sixty-seven times the word ‘gaal’ is noted as meaning to ‘redeem’, fourteen of those occur in the book of Leviticus, specifically in chapters 25 and 27. In the book of Isaiah, the word is used twenty-three times, no instances being found prior to chapter 35, and twelve of them being found between chapters 41 and 49. In contrast, the word ‘padah’ as ‘redemption’ is scattered primarily throughout the Pentateuch, and in other various places of the OT. Most of its usage seems to center around the event of Israel’s liberation from Egypt (six times in Numbers, twice in Exodus), the priestly redemption of every firstborn of Israel (Numbers 18), and the rescue of individuals (Psalms, Job) and the nation (Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Nehemiah, Zechariah) from present trouble, particularly in relation to the Exile. One other significant context to note is in the third chapter of Numbers, where the term ‘redemption’ is used in four instances, this time being translated from the Hebrew ‘פְּדוּיִם pəḏûyim’, which means ‘ransom’.<sup>4</sup> It will be worth looking at each of these biblical contexts in more detail.

### ***Redemption as Liberation: Leviticus***

The first use of ‘redemption’ mentioned is that of Leviticus chapters 25 and 27, which focuses almost exclusively on the commandments related to the Jubilee. This term comes from the Hebrew ‘yōbbhēl’, which literally means ‘ram’s horn.’<sup>5</sup> This refers to the blowing of the ram’s

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<sup>3</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. Electronic edition. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 1997. HGK7009.

<sup>4</sup> Strong, *The exhaustive concordance*.

<sup>5</sup> “Redemption.” *Miriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. 10<sup>th</sup> Ed. 1993. Print.

horn that was to mark the beginning of an extraordinary season of material reparation among the Israelite nation. It is worth recounting the text itself which has been passed on for many generations.

You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property. When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. When you buy from your neighbor, you shall pay only for the number of years since the jubilee; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop years. If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. Should you ask, “What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?” I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years. When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old. The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.<sup>6</sup>

As the text suggests, God seems to have had three purposes for giving the Jubilee commandment to the Israelites. First, not being able to own land permanently was to remind the Israelites that they were ‘but aliens and my tenants,’<sup>7</sup> referring of course to God being the true Creator to whom all things in His creation belonged. The second purpose for Jubilee is to ensure a society of ‘equal opportunity’ among the Israelites, the ‘aliens,’ and the ‘poor.’<sup>8</sup> Third, the land

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<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 25:8-22.

<sup>7</sup> Leviticus 25:23.

<sup>8</sup> Leviticus 25:17, 39-43.



itself was clearly a concern to God. The purpose of the Jubilee was as much for the land as it was for the Israelites who inhabited it.

Every seven years, and on the fiftieth (Jubilee) year, the Israelites were to let the land 'rest' from their toiling of it.<sup>9</sup> In a remarkable passage in the following chapter, God warns the Israelites that in not honouring the Sabbath of the land, they will experience cruel hardship in the land, including exile from the promised land to other nations. God then concludes with this point: "Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it."<sup>10</sup> In God's order, even the earth should not be oppressed from abuse and over-consumption. By each of these purposes – return of property, fair treatment of aliens and the poor, and restoration of the earth – God is seen through his redemptive activity as an 'avenger' of the unjustly treated. We begin to see that redemption is about restorative justice and the renewal of human relationships to one another and to creation. These commandments were intended to ensure the Israelites would live with a healthy dose of 'reverential fear,' not taking for granted their existence in the promised land, but cherishing each moment as a blessing of their own redemption from slavery in Egypt.<sup>11</sup> To that story we now briefly turn.

### ***The Cost of Liberation and the role of Kinsman-Redeemer: Exodus***

"In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode."<sup>12</sup> This is a verse from the song of Moses, standing on the far shore of the Red Sea with the Israelites, celebrating their most incredible rescue from the Egyptians. An interesting thing to note, is that in this Exodus story both 'gaal' and 'padah' are employed. In

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<sup>9</sup> Leviticus 25:5.

<sup>10</sup> Leviticus 26:34-35.

<sup>11</sup> Leviticus 25:38, 42, 55.

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 15:13.

Exodus 13, in the events leading up to the crossing over the Red Sea, God speaks through Moses of the ‘padah’ (‘a cost for freedom’) that must be given by the Israelites for the liberation that God will win for them. This cost will be the sacrifice of every first born male among them, with the option of ‘redeeming’ (purchasing the freedom) of their first born children with money.<sup>13</sup> God explains the significance of this:

When in the future your child asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall answer, ‘By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ It shall serve as a sign on your hand and as an emblem on your forehead that by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

Then, just following the miraculous crossing, the text from Moses’ song uses ‘gaal’ (kinsman-redeemer), presumably to indicate the nature of the relationship in which God has carried out this act of liberation.<sup>15</sup> The significance of God being identified as ‘kinsman-redeemer’ is based on the history of blood relatives often being charged with the duty of restoring the dignity of a kinsmen and paying the cost of a ransom and/or avenging his wrongs.<sup>16</sup> We see a poignant illustration of this in the story of Ruth offering herself in marriage to Naomi’s relative, Boaz, and in the process thereby redeeming Naomi’s place in the family social structure.<sup>17</sup>

Strangely enough, even though God is clearly playing the role of ‘kinsman-redeemer’ in the above story of the Exodus, it is the Israelites who essentially must pay the cost by offering to God their first-born males – or at the least buy them back. Old Testament scholar, J.I. Durham, picks up on this interesting twist in the narrative, and explains it this way; “Yahweh’s decimation of all of the firstborn of Egypt, prompted by Pharaoh’s stubborn-mindedness, necessitated the

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<sup>13</sup> Exodus 13:11-13.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 13:14-16.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 15:13.

<sup>16</sup> Easton, Matthew. *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1987. Print.

<sup>17</sup> Bush, Frederic. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ruth, Esther*. Dallas: Word Books Publisher. 1996. 166. Electronic edition.

sparing of all of the firstborn of Israel, who, having thus been saved by him, belong to him. Thus each Israelite livestock-owner and father must offer to Yahweh or replace every firstborn male.”<sup>18</sup>

Durham goes on to explain further the significance of this for subsequent generations of readers:

[The end result is...] that those who are to come may know the exodus, by taste and by feel, by cost and by result, as an experience of their own as equally as an experience of their fathers. And so they await the time, then taste the bread and give Yahweh his due, explain it all to the ones who must remember to those after them, and thus experience the freedom to glorify Yahweh in service that is their heritage.<sup>19</sup>

What we learn then from the Exodus story is that there is a cost (‘padah’) to redemption that must be paid, which is the duty of a kinsman-redeemer (‘gaal’) to fulfill. What is unique for the Israelites following this event, is that they will be reminded continually of the cost of their own freedom through their own sacrifice. The deeper theological rationale of the Israelites’ debt for their own freedom may be explained most effectively in the story of Jesus. For now, we continue to look at evidence in the Old Testament of the meaning of redemption.

### ***Redemption as God’s Saving Grace: Isaiah***

“I will help you, says the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.”<sup>20</sup> Thus begins a section of the book of Isaiah that heralds hope and courage for the Israelites in the midst their desperate circumstances of being oppressed by foreign powers. In his commentary on this passage, J.D.W. Watts, remarks;

A redeemer is one who has a close relationship with the one being redeemed. This relation of God to Israel is, of course, neither one of blood nor of tribal relation...It is formed by the covenant and thus is at least as strong a bond and obligation as that formed by kinship...There can be no doubt about the effectiveness of this help. It is *The Holy One of Israel*, Yahweh himself, who has promised it.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Durham, John. *Word Biblical commentary: Exodus*. Vol.3. Dallas: Word Books Publisher. 1987. 179. Electronic edition.

<sup>19</sup> Durham, *Word Biblical commentary: Exodus*, 180.

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 41:14.

<sup>21</sup> Watts, John. *Word Biblical Commentary : Isaiah 34-66, Revised*. Vol.25. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1987. 105. Electronic edition.

An important aspect of redemption is highlighted in this prophetic section, in that the nature of God's 'kinsman-redeemer' relationship with His people becomes clearer. That, of course, will become more evident in the New Testament. The definition, however, is clearly being worked out prior to Jesus. What is also evidently being worked out here is the relation of the terms 'redemption' to that of 'salvation.' Watts points out how closely these two terms are becoming related in this time of writing,<sup>22</sup> which could lead one to recognize what I would describe as a broader 'grace margin' in the process of redemption, than what might have been seen in earlier testaments. Observes Watts:

The practical aspects of salvation (restoration of Jerusalem, building highways, restoring land-rights for Judean villages, creating possibilities for pilgrimage), paralleled by social renewal (creating a new Jewish social order and spirit), and leading to spiritual enrichment (sharing the joy of worship in the new Jerusalem) are all part of this redeeming process. The power and determination of Yahweh make it possible. His presence and goals lend a sacramental aspect to the entire project which more than justifies the use of words like "redeem" and "ransom." The practical political and social dimensions of God's work justify the use of terms like "save" and "deliver." For all the strong exhortation in exuberant terms, the project is practical and possible. The city is rebuilt. Judaism becomes a religio-social community that was able to survive and flourish in the social and political setting of empire. All this, along with the development of spiritual aspects of self-identification as Yahweh's people and of trust in him for all they needed, is contained in the picture of salvation/redemption presented...<sup>23</sup>

Salvation means "rescue/help," which implies an inability on the part of the person to find safety from danger.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the harsh reminder of the cost of their own redemption at the time of the Exodus, God's language in this moment of Isaiah's prophecy sounds decidedly more gracious in light of the nation's obvious inability to redeem their own situation. In fact, God goes so far as to acknowledge before the Israelites that their fate is actually not entirely of their own doing, but part of His sovereign plan to shape a nation who, in their humility, will learn true righteousness and devotion.<sup>25</sup> Here, because of God's unique covenant relationship with Israel,

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<sup>22</sup> Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary : Isaiah 34-66*, 106.

<sup>23</sup> Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary : Isaiah 34-66*, 106.

<sup>24</sup> Achtemeier, Paul. *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985. 894. Print.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 45:1-25.

God's redemptive activity among His own people is experienced in a unique way also. God is showing He is increasingly prepared to pay the full cost of Israel's spiritual and physical slavery.

***Redemption as Spiritual Restoration: Psalms***

This leads us to the final section of Old Testament I will briefly explore in this search for the biblical meaning of 'redemption,' before turning our attention to the New Testament. In the Book of Psalms, one writer acknowledges that God is really the only one who can pay the final cost of redemption, for death is the one great enemy all humans are slave to and have no power over.<sup>26</sup> This realization runs deep within the Psalms, as much of the writing turns inward and reflects on the deepest existential questions of life and death. In the Psalms, the subject of redemption is raised six times in settings which draw the meaning to a very personal and intimate level. Most notable among these is Psalm 69:

Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good;  
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.  
Do not hide your face from your servant,  
for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.  
Draw near to me, redeem me,  
set me free because of my enemies.<sup>27</sup>

The psalmist employs the use of 'gaal', or kinsman-redeemer, which evokes a strong personal relationship with the God to whom he is beseeching help. Moreover, the focus of this plea for redemption is clearly not political in nature, but spiritual. The psalmists wants to be 'set free' not from political chains, but moral despair. While he certainly feels unfairly treated, redemption is expressed here primarily as a recovery of a lost spirit in the face of difficult circumstances. Redemption becomes 'restoration of the soul.' It is being set free from the spiritual suffering that is caused by sin and evil in the world. We hear this spoken in the words of Psalm 49:

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<sup>26</sup> Psalm 49:7-9.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 69:1-16.

This is the fate of those who trust in themselves,  
 and of their followers, who approve their sayings.  
 They are like sheep and are destined to die;  
 death will be their shepherd  
 (but the upright will prevail over them in the morning).  
 Their forms will decay in the grave,  
 far from their princely mansions.  
 But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead;  
 he will surely take me to himself.<sup>28</sup>

Here we see at a clearer level how redemption is regarded, from scriptural testimony, as not only a political act shaping present reality, but a spiritual restoration of the soul with future implications. Death, as eternal separation from God, is the great moral enemy which the biblical writers above all sought to be free from. Redemption, for the psalmists and other Old Testament writers, was the restoration of both body and soul, physical and spiritual, through the liberating power of God's presence. Fewer places capture the holistic nature of God's redemptive work better than Psalm 107:

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!  
 For His mercy *endures* forever.  
 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*,  
 Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,  
 And gathered out of the lands,  
 From the east and from the west,  
 From the north and from the south.  
 They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way;  
 They found no city to dwell in.  
 Hungry and thirsty,  
 Their soul fainted in them.  
 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,  
 And He delivered them out of their distresses.  
 And He led them forth by the right way,  
 That they might go to a city for a dwelling place.  
 Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD *for* His goodness,  
 And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!  
 For He satisfies the longing soul,  
 And fills the hungry soul with goodness...  
 He turns a wilderness into pools of water,  
 And dry land into watersprings.  
 There He makes the hungry dwell,  
 That they may establish a city for a dwelling place,

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<sup>28</sup>Psalm 49:13-15.

And sow fields and plant vineyards,  
 That they may yield a fruitful harvest.  
 He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly;  
 And He does not let their cattle decrease.<sup>29</sup>

### *Summary of Redemption in the Old Testament*

The use of redemption in the Old Testament takes place in various contexts, ones which cross political and social as well as spiritual lines. Nevertheless, what is striking is how clearly the meaning of redemption itself is located in the very real social context of slavery and liberation. This sets the tone for the whole story of God's redemptive work in the world. As the ancient story unfolds, we recognize God is concerned with a whole creation in captivity, and is taking an increasingly proactive role in the liberation of His creation from the power of evil. While the people of God experience their own liberation in Exodus, in the book of Leviticus the same people are given a commandment to ensure the redemption of all creation from exploitation and abuse.

In today's modern western church, the notion of redemption is largely used in terms of personal salvation from sin. Unfortunately, the much deeper connotations of biblical redemption are lost in this translation. Social justice and ecological restoration, peaceful cities, as well as restored souls, is the vision of ancient Scripture. The Old Testament gives abundant evidence of God's concern for the redemption of all aspects of His creation, the social as well as the personal, physical as well as spiritual. In the complexity of the created order, the reality of redemption was experienced by God's people as both present liberation as well as assurance of eternal freedom.

The story, however, is not complete. By the time one reaches the New Testament a whole unwritten chapter has been lived by the Israelites, one that sees a return of the days of political and social oppression. During these times the moral integrity of the Jewish religion also becomes suspect, and the ordinary people again find themselves crying to God for redemption. We will

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<sup>29</sup> Psalm 107

now explore how the New Testament brings even deeper meaning to God's redemptive work in the world.

### The Meaning of Redemption in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the word 'redemption', or 'redeem', is used twenty-two times.<sup>30</sup> Similar to what is seen in the Old Testament writings, the notion of redemption in the NT is defined by two terms used very closely together. It is derived seven times from the Greek 'ἀγορά' [*agora* /ag·or·ah/], which Strong has translated to mean: "1 any assembly, especially of the people. 2 the place of assembly. 2A for public debating,. 2B for elections. 2C for trials. 2D for buying and selling. 2E for all kinds of business. 3 market place, street."<sup>31</sup> Kittel directly attributes the term 'ἀγορά' as the basis of Paul's famous slogan of 'not being our own' but 'bought with a price' in his letter to the Corinthians, a clear theological expression of redemption.<sup>32</sup>

The term is also found fifteen times stemming from the Greek root word 'λύω' [*luo* /loo·o/], which is translated to mean:

1 to loose any person (or thing) tied or fastened. 2 to loose one bound, i.e. to unbind, release from bonds, set free. 3 to loosen, undo, dissolve, anything bound, tied, or compacted together. 3A an assembly, i.e. to dismiss, break up. 3B laws, as having a binding force, are likened to bonds. 3C to annul, subvert. 3D to do away with, to deprive of authority, whether by precept or act. 3E to declare unlawful. 3F to loose what is compacted or built together, to break up, demolish, destroy. 3G to dissolve something coherent into parts, to destroy. 3H metaph., to overthrow, to do away with.<sup>33</sup>

Here, as in the Old Testament, the context for its use is important to observe. Of the twenty-two verses in the New Testament that speak of redemption, eleven of them contain

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<sup>30</sup> Luke 1:68; Luke 2:38; Luke 21:28; Luke 24:21; Romans 3:24; Romans 8:23; Hebrews 9:12,15; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18; Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:7,14; Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 4:5; Revelation 5:9; Revelation 14:3,4; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 1:30.

<sup>31</sup> Strong.

<sup>32</sup> Kittel, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume IV. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1964. 124. Print.

<sup>33</sup> Strong. See also; Smith, J.B.. *Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament*. Scottsdale: Herald Press. 1955. 219. Print.



specific references to Jesus in the context of his suffering and death.<sup>34</sup> There is clearly, in the minds of the New Testament writers, a relation between redemption and the cross. The Greek words 'luo' and 'agorah' used in the texts evoke images of a marketplace, where transactions are being made for bound slaves.<sup>35</sup> The writers are placing Jesus in the center of this transaction, paying the cost for the freedom of these slaves by his own crucifixion, ie. his own captivity to suffering and death. They use such phrases as 'iniquity',<sup>36</sup> 'cursed under the law',<sup>37</sup> 'in bondage under the elements of the world',<sup>38</sup> to describe the condition of humanity prior to Jesus entering the scene. The writers then describe the transformative effect of Jesus' transaction of his life for theirs; 'saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us',<sup>39</sup> a 'purified and peculiar people',<sup>40</sup> 'adopted sons',<sup>41</sup> 'made into kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.'<sup>42</sup>

### *The Cost of Redeeming Life from Death: Jesus the Son of God*

Because of the relatively scarce use of the term 'redemption' in the New Testament, it is vital to remember both the breadth of its meaning in the Old Testament and its significance in shaping the Israelites' understanding of God's purpose and activity in the world. What the New Testament brings to fulfillment is the realization of the true cost of full redemption. Humanity is 'in bondage' both physically and spiritually. Sin and death plague God's creation, and is holding all things captive. Freedom from death is beyond the ability of human beings to purchase, as the psalmist declared in Psalm 49. Since God's purpose is to redeem all creation from sin and death, God – as our 'kinsman-redeemer' - willingly becomes one of us in death, in order to liberate His own people from it. Death presumes it has gained the better hand in the exchange, but the surprise

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<sup>34</sup> Hebrews 9:12,15; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18; Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:5; Revelation 5:9; Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14.

<sup>35</sup> McGrath, Alistair. *Redemption*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2006. 6. Print.

<sup>36</sup> Titus 2:14.

<sup>37</sup> Galatians 3:13.

<sup>38</sup> Galatians 4:5.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 1:68.

<sup>40</sup> Titus 2:14.

<sup>41</sup> Galatians 4:5.

<sup>42</sup> Revelation 5:9.

of Jesus' resurrection reveals God's hand to be stronger, and thus liberates humanity both physically and spiritually from the spectre of death.<sup>43</sup> This, essentially, is the process of redemption as the biblical writers understand it. The effect of redemption upon those who claim the power of Jesus' resurrection, is key to understanding the relation between redemption and the kingdom of God. This will be the next focus of this study.

### ***Redemption and Co-Inheritance with Christ***

Notice how the New Testament writers describe those who have experienced the redemptive work of Christ. There is a clear sense of having a different status and identity. No longer are we slaves, but 'adopted sons' and 'kings.' These terms of royalty and privilege indicate that, in the minds of the New Testament writers, a significant shift in power has occurred as a result of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Not only are we as individuals rescued from slavery, but in the process we have been transformed into 'kings-elect' of the estate. Not only does the world no longer have dominion over us, but in Christ we have been given dominion over this world! This, it seems, was God's purpose for humanity all along, to be 'co-heirs' with Christ of God's Kingdom, as the core teaching of Jesus would attest to. For, at the heart of Jesus' message was the news that the kingdom of God is drawing near, and that we are to turn around and get ready to receive it.

In a brief moment, we will finally turn to that subject. By way of summary, though, the reader can refer to the exegetical chart in Appendix A as perhaps a helpful way of recalling the key terms and meanings for redemption in Scripture.

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<sup>43</sup> Sheets, John R, ed. *The Theology of Atonement*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 1967. 115. Print.

## The Kingdom of God and Redemption

### *The Kingdom of God as the 'Reign of God'*

This, of course, begs the one real question which remains, what *kind* of kingdom are we talking about? This was clearly the question that Jesus came to answer, for much of his teaching centers on the nature of God's kingdom, and the character of those who would claim to represent it. There is one term used by all the New Testament writers to describe Jesus' notion of the kingdom of God – βασιλεία [*basileia* /bas·il·i·ah/]. Strong's concordance offers this definition of the term: "1 royal power, kingship, dominion, rule. 1A not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom. 1B of the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah. 1C of the royal power and dignity conferred on Christians in the Messiah's kingdom."<sup>44</sup>

What is interesting to note here, is the distinct emphasis placed on the 'right' or 'power' of the one ruling. Elsewhere, the significance is explained this way; "In relation to the general usage of βασιλεία, usually translated 'kingdom', it is to be noted first that it signifies the 'being', 'nature', and 'state' of the king. Since the reference is to a king, we do best to speak first of his 'dignity' or 'power'."<sup>45</sup> One could argue, then, that the term would better be translated as 'reign' of God, rather than 'kingdom,' which too strongly connotes a geographical territory.<sup>46</sup> Jesus, as N.T. Wright points out, is actually connecting the 'kingdom' to God's deeper vision of creation's full liberation, over and above the immediate political aspirations of Israel.<sup>47</sup> The heralding of God's reign would not translate into a superficial transferral of power from one

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<sup>44</sup>Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance*.

<sup>45</sup>Kittel, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, volume I*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1964. 579. Print.

<sup>46</sup>Guder, Darrell and Lois Barrett. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. 94. Print.

<sup>47</sup>Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. New York: HarperCollins. 2006. 102. Print.

nation to the next. Instead, with the arrival of Jesus, God is bringing to the forefront of history his reign which was 'before time'.<sup>48</sup> He is moving ahead and turning the existing order upside down and inside-out. The reign of God was never intended to be a temporal kingdom in creation, but *the reality* in which creation existed.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Problem of Kingship in the Old Testament***

To be sure, the nation of Israel by Jesus' time had many notions of what kind of kingdom they would prefer. In fact, without going into detail, this became a critical factor in Jesus' ultimate death, for the kingdom he proclaimed was, in many respects, at odds with the kind of kingdom most were placing their hopes in. In the times of the Old Testament, there was a clear sense of God having sovereign power over the earth.<sup>50</sup> The ascendancy of David as king over Israel, however, pushed some of his contemporary writers to draw analogies between God's rule in heaven and David's rule on earth. Human kings, against God's prophetic warning,<sup>51</sup> were ascribed tremendous power, and the ambitions of the people followed.<sup>52</sup> That analogy, though, became quickly suspect as subsequent kings fell far short of David's glory and ultimately left the nation morally impoverished.<sup>53</sup> Years in exile, however, did not diminish the Israelite's hopes for

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<sup>48</sup> Colossians 1:15-20.

<sup>49</sup> Going back to the first chapters in the Bible, the description of human beings made in the 'image of God' has been related to the practice of kings sending forth ambassadors throughout the realm to 'bear witness' to the king's rule. (Hoekema, Anthony. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing. 1986. 67-68. Print.) Thus the first commandment to 'rule over creation' (Gen 1:26, 28; 2:15), can only be understood as the divinely appointed role to act as stewards the earth in a way that brings honour to our king, the good and loving Creator of the universe (Gen 1:31; 2:18). So here we see, in the beginning, a conceptualisation of the reign of God as a just and loving rule of God's own creation through his entrusted stewards.

<sup>50</sup> Psalm 47, 96-99.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Samuel 8:6-9.

<sup>52</sup> Psalm 72.

<sup>53</sup> Eichrodt, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Volume 1*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 1960. 439-440. Print.

reclaiming a kingdom for themselves in the centuries that followed; a peaceable and prosperous realm of their own, free from the threats of foreign incursions.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Jesus' Subversive Teaching of the Kingdom***

Jesus, however, spoke about 'kingdom' in a very different tone. His kingdom had no inflections of a nationalist agenda, no rumours of political rebellion, no images of a theocracy like what once was celebrated in David's time. The images Jesus used for kingdom were 'sower and seed,' 'wheat in the midst of weeds,' 'mustard seed,' 'hidden treasure in a field,' 'lost pearl,' and a 'fishing net in a lake.'<sup>55</sup> These are hardly images that would inspire the masses to take to the streets in revolution of Rome! Indeed, on the surface, Jesus' vision of the kingdom was not a compelling one. In the end, what made Jesus' teaching so compelling were not so much his words, but his actions.

It was there, in the miracles and movements of Jesus, that people saw the power of a messiah and Christ. In some respect, Jesus' actions defined his words and brought meaning to them, in a way which otherwise would have left people confused by his teaching. It is fair to say that Jesus' actions were louder than his words.<sup>56</sup> The ethics of Jesus reflected a character of God's reign that was unequivocal. He acted with great power in caring for the sick, exorcising demons, feeding the hungry, and raising the dead.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, he consistently chose to be identified with outcasts and 'sinners'.<sup>58</sup> Jesus showed little regard for the thoughts of the powerful, for he made it clear the kingdom could not be comprehended from a place of power and privilege as much as through the humble imagination and wonder 'of a child.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Wright, N.T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers. 1997. 463. Print.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 13.

<sup>56</sup> Mark 3:7-12.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew 10:8.

<sup>58</sup> Mark 2:17.

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 11:25; Matthew 18:2-4; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 10:21.

### *The 'Hidden' Nature of God's Reign*

There is a sense of Jesus pointing to a kingdom emerging from 'underneath', rather than being imposed from 'above' or from 'outside'. In one instance during his teaching, when Jesus is asked to predict the coming of God's kingdom, Jesus replies in the most startling fashion; "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is', because the kingdom of God is within you."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, most of the images of Jesus evoke an 'organic' feel to God's reign. Things are either buried or growing in the earth, or under the surface and being cultivated, or dug out and raised up. God is taking the 'stuff' of this created order and re-shaping it into his own reality.

The plan is very clear; "a new heaven and new earth" is being formed right before our very eyes.<sup>61</sup> The surprise and mystery is the process of this plan. God is choosing not to demolish or cast aside the old order, like what would happen through a violent invasion or political coup. Instead, God has chosen the process of *redeeming* the old order, reclaiming what once was alienated from God, restoring what has become broken, reconciling what was torn apart, returning to glory and honour those who were held captive in sin and death. God has now, in Christ, become inextricably bound up with creation. Just as the shame of creation's sin was the shame of Christ, so the future glory of Christ will be the future glory of creation. As Paul said; "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself *all things*, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."<sup>62</sup> The judgment of Christ, therefore, was not to be seen as a threat of power but as an assurance of his promise. In the grace of Christ, the glory of our redemption is certain.

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<sup>60</sup> Luke 17:20-21.

<sup>61</sup> Revelation 21:1-4.

<sup>62</sup> Colossians 1:19-20 (*italics mine*).

### *The Consummation of God's Redemptive Reign*

What remains to be seen is how the redemption of creation will finally be realized through this 'hidden' reign of God. Hollinger raises the issue in this way:

Though Christ brought redemption to the world through his death and resurrection, it is quite clear that redemption of the moral life is not yet fully evident, even in the redeemed community. The realities of sin and the fall are prevalent everywhere...and though a cosmic redemption is envisioned through the work of Christ, one at times has to look hard to find glimpses of it within a broken world. Thus, the Christian worldview understands that the completion of Christ's redemption awaits the eschaton, when a final consummation will bring all things under his feet.<sup>63</sup>

But the eschaton itself is controversial for Christianity, for there has been no uniform view on what a fully redeemed world would like and when it will finally come. Hollinger points out that our eschatological views are shaped largely on 'conceptualizations of the kingdom of God and the notion of hope.'<sup>64</sup> He uses the notions framed by the pre and post-millennial camps to illustrate his point. For premillennialists, the kingdom of God is regarded as 'a future reign with no relevance to life in the present.' The implications of this view, is that its proponents have told the church it has "nothing to do with reform in society. Its only business is to preach the gospel, exhibit holy and unspotted lives, and thus bear witness to the grace of God."<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, Christians have conceived the kingdom of God as a reality that can be experienced in full continuity with the present. This 'realized eschatology' is a view held by so-called postmillennialists, who believe that 'the second return of Christ will come after the kingdom spreads throughout the world.' The kingdom of God, they presume, can and will be built in the structures and institutions of this present age, as evils are slowly eradicated by the moral actions of human society. Hollinger critiques this view as one that is founded on "either an optimistic idealism about the forces of history or a triumphalism that fails to comprehend clearly

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<sup>63</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Ada: Baker Academic, 2002. 83. Print.

<sup>64</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 84.

<sup>65</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 84.

the nature of the kingdom as taught in God's Word and the fallen nature of all social and political endeavours in this world."<sup>66</sup>

There is an alternate, paradoxical view of the coming kingdom, which Hollinger describes as 'eschatological hope.'<sup>67</sup> This view holds in tension the 'already' and 'not yet' dimensions of the kingdom of God. During his ministry, Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God 'is at hand',<sup>68</sup> and at the same time warned people to prepare for a climactic end to this age.<sup>69</sup> It is this tension in our view of the kingdom, Hollinger claims, that fashions the most profound ethics for the church. He writes:

According to the Christian worldview, history will not go on in endless fashion, nor is there despair in light of the future forces of history. In contrast to secular utopian hopes or eschatological despair, 'Hope of a properly transcendent sort (ie. hope which is invested in something lying beyond the horizons of nature and history...) is not only compatible with but actually furnishes the most adequate source of and resources for action designed to transfigure the here-and-now.'<sup>70</sup>

### **Summary of the Biblical Paradigm of the Redemptive Reign of God**

In biblical terms, redemption is the result of the liberation and transformation of all creation initiated by, and oriented toward, God. In Christ, God has become our 'kinsman-redeemer,' standing at the center of the marketplace, paying the cost for our freedom by His own crucifixion (ie. his own captivity to suffering and death), and reconciling His people now redeemed in Christ. Through Jesus' resurrection/liberation we see the reality of hope in the power/rule of God over death and sin. In the victory of Christ our dignity is restored as 'image bearers' of God. We are set free from the power of death, and given authority to once again 'bear witness' to the reign of God in all the earth by taking on ourselves the paschal mystery of Christ. We are to have the mindset of being 'heirs' of a kingdom of justice, beauty, truth, and loving

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<sup>66</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 85.

<sup>67</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 85.

<sup>68</sup> Mark 1:15.

<sup>69</sup> Mark 13.

<sup>70</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 85.



relationships, which we are certain will ultimately prevail against what the baptismal covenant describes as, “the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.”<sup>71</sup>

Until the redemptive process is fulfilled and all creation saved, our witness of God’s reign occurs in the tension and ambiguity of the ‘already/not yet.’ We are called upon to be hopeful in our approach to proclaiming the good news, while humbly acknowledging the power of transformation to be God’s alone.<sup>72</sup> Recognizing the nature of God’s redemptive work in the world, we strive to reveal signs of both personal and social transformation, as all dimensions of life fall under the reign of God. As Hollinger contends; “The consummation is not a theology of escapism and abdication of responsibility within this world; it is a reminder to live now in light of the coming kingdom of God when justice, peace, righteousness, truthfulness, and purity will be made complete.”<sup>73</sup>

Having clarified the meaning of redemption and the kingdom of God, I will now move forward in building a model of ministry formation based on these two vital concepts. Reviewing the exegetical work, it is evident that the guiding assumptions of this thesis-project still hold. Because it is clear the kingdom of God is the essence of Christ’s mission, forming disciples according to this reality should be the main concern of the Church. Also, the biblical evidence points to the reality of God’s kingdom being a *holistic redemptive vision* for all creation. At an ethical level, this calls for deep ongoing critical discernment of the emotional, physical, and

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<sup>71</sup> Anglican Book Centre. *Book of Alternative Services*. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985. 154. Print.

<sup>72</sup> From his years as an influential missionary in India, E. Stanley Jones wrote a poignant cautionary note regarding how we perceive ourselves in the light of God’s kingdom. Jones emphasized redemption is clearly the summation of God’s mission in the world, and not the church. He writes: “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might redeem it. But He never gave Himself for the Kingdom to redeem it. For the Kingdom is itself redemption. It is not the subject of redemption – it offers it. The difference is profound. The Church may be, and is, the agent of the coming of that redemption, but it is the agent and not the Absolute. I am bound to be loyal to the Church to the degree that it is loyal to the Kingdom, but my highest loyalty is to the Kingdom, and when these loyalties conflict, then I must bow the knee finally to the Kingdom. Any false loyalty to the Church which would make it take the place of the Kingdom is destructive to the Church.” (Jones, E. Stanley. *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* New York: Abingdon Press. 1940. 58-59. Print.)

<sup>73</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 86.

spiritual bonds that hold creation and human beings captive. Any model of ministry formation must take these dimensions of being into account. How do disciples enable transformation at these levels of reality? The development of this kind of *holistic redemptive vision* for ministry is the focus of the curriculum project presented in chapter four. Before presenting the project in detail, though, the next chapter will be a review of existing models of Christian ethics which were useful in determining the right kind of content and design for such a curriculum.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last chapter I explored the pervasive theme of redemption in the Old Testament, and how it relates to the central message of the kingdom of God in Jesus' ministry. My objective for this chapter is to try to determine how discipleship and ministry formation can be built from these theological themes. Research consisted of reading various volumes in the library, glancing through theological and philosophical texts, and comparing different models of leadership and faith development (based largely on psychological theories). In the end, I found myself returning most frequently to the arena of ethics, and of course the field of Christian ethics in particular. I came to appreciate the focus of this field of study in determining not just how agents act in societal contexts, but framing such action in normative terms. These ethical norms were helpful in framing a practical curriculum for ministry formation.

Furthermore, having raised in the first chapter the issue of how culturally induced theological 'blind-spots' have adversely shaped the church's practice of ministry, I realized I needed a tool in helping to objectively evaluate which theological models, in the end, were the most sound. I felt some kind of metrics drawn from a comparative study of the theological views of the Kingdom through history would be important. In his book, *Models of the Kingdom*, Howard Snyder provides good criteria in determining what models draw close to a holistic and balanced view of the Kingdom. His assessment is based primarily on how clearly each model is able to hold in tension what he describes as, "six fundamental *tension points* or *polarities* that are central to the mystery of God's reign."<sup>1</sup> They are as follows:

1. present versus future
2. individual versus social
3. spirit versus matter
4. gradual versus climactic
5. divine action versus human action

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<sup>1</sup> Snyder, Howard. *Models of the Kingdom*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1991. 16. Print.

## 6. the Church's relation to the kingdom<sup>2</sup>

As already alluded to, of the models I surveyed, those developed within the discipline of ethics most effectively addressed these inherent tension points of the Kingdom. This chapter then will compare two models of ethics, which seem to capture especially well the notion of holistic redemption. Similar to how Snyder lays out his research, I will first provide an overview of each model, then briefly locate the model in its broader literary context, and finally an assessment of how each model can be applied to the thesis-project itself.

### **The Willimon-Hauerwas Model of Kingdom Ethics: *Living as Resident Aliens***

#### ***Overview***

The first model is one I will call the the Willimon-Hauerwas model. Snyder would refer to this model as an example of a 'countersystem'.<sup>3</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, a long-time Methodist turned Episcopalian, and William Willimon, himself a Methodist, co-published a seminal book in the late 80s called, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, that marked a dramatic shift in mainline protestant ethics. As the subtitle suggests, these co-authors were promoting a Christian ethic that was a radical departure from 'establishment' mindset to 'outpost' mentality. As the longer tag on the front cover of the first edition stated, this work was intended to be "a provocative Christian assessment of culture and ministry for people who know that something is wrong."<sup>4</sup> Having been pushed (or abandoned) from the center of society, the North American church needed to learn to function on the margins as a signpost of a different kingdom.

The authors take their cue from Karl Barth who, in stark contrast to Paul Tillich, did not see the problem of modern Christianity being the need for a new theology but a new way of being church. Willimon and Hauerwas assert that the modern Church's agenda of making the gospel

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<sup>2</sup> Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*, 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*, 82.

<sup>4</sup> Willimon, William and Stanley Hauerwas. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1989. Print.

credible to the world has missed the point. Rather, our task was, and is, “to make the world credible to the gospel.”<sup>5</sup> They continue:

Christianity is more than a matter of a new understanding. Christianity is an invitation to be part of an alien people who make a difference because they see something that cannot otherwise be seen without Christ. Right living is more the challenge than right thinking. The challenge is not the intellectual one but the political one – the creation of a new people who have aligned themselves with the seismic shift that has occurred in the world since Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The remainder of their work, developed essentially in two books, is an attempt to redefine Christian politics and offer an ethical model for this countercultural ‘alien people.’

### ***Christian Politics***

#### *The Task is the Church*

The authors state their premise very clearly; “Christianity is mostly a matter of politics – politics defined by the gospel.”<sup>7</sup> What follows is a stinging critique of ‘Constantinian’ democracy (which includes modern versions of both conservatism and liberalism); a socio-political system in which “‘freedom’ becomes the tyranny of our own desires”<sup>8</sup>, and “the church becomes one more consumer-oriented organization”.<sup>9</sup> In this political context they argue the futility of Christian political activism, which functions under the same presumption that God is largely superfluous to our own individual endeavours. Instead they call for a radical break from the Church’s pattern of involvement in the world, arguing that “the political task of the Christians is to be church rather than to transform the world.”<sup>10</sup> While the implications of what they are saying for this thesis-project will need to be explored more critically, their rationale for making such a claim is a compelling one:

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<sup>5</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 38.

One reason why it is not enough to say that our first task is to make the world better is that we Christians have no other means of accurately understanding the world and rightly interpreting the world except by the way of the church. Big words like 'peace' and 'justice', slogans the church adopts under the presumption that, even if people do not know what 'Jesus Christ is Lord' means, they will know what peace and justice means, are words awaiting content. The church really does not know what these words mean apart from the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. After all, Pilate permitted the killing of Jesus in order to secure both peace and justice (Roman style) in Judea. It is Jesus' story that gives content to our faith, judges any institutional embodiment of our faith, and teaches us to be suspicious of any political slogan that does not need God to make itself credible.<sup>11</sup>

They refute Richard Niebuhr's typology, which pits the countercultural model of church against his model of church as 'transformer' of culture, which they essentially regard as a compromise between the gospel and the world.<sup>12</sup> The authors also go on to reject any claims of 'tribalism' in their ecclesiology, arguing instead that the worst form of tribalism is the same nation states that the modern western church has buttressed, "which sets up artificial boundaries and defends them with murderous intensity".<sup>13</sup> What they press for, is a recognition that the Church must be primarily focused with being the church, and not be concerned with its credibility before the world.

### *The Church's Social Strategy*

Willimon and Hauerwas find John Howard Yoder's typology to be more helpful. According to his terms, different than the 'activist' or 'conversionist' church, the 'confessing' church presents a radical third way with its "main political task to lie, not in the personal transformation of individual hearts and modification of society, but rather in the congregations' determination to worship Christ in all things."<sup>14</sup>

The value of typologies, of course, is they are a tool in clarifying the identity of one thing in relation to another. I believe what Willimon and Hauerwas are attempting to do here is clarify

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<sup>11</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 39-41.

<sup>13</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 45.

precisely who the church really is in relation to society. For them, the ‘confessing’ church provides the most distinguishing character of being Church. They understand the Church as something so unique, that it must continually discriminate itself from other forms of *polis*, regardless of the socio-political context it finds itself in. They express this view in the following way: “The confessing church moves from the activist church’s acceptance of the culture with a few qualifications, to rejection of the culture with a few exceptions.”<sup>15</sup>

Their only rationale for such a statement, from a missional perspective, is their ardent belief that the Church’s most credible witness of the gospel to the world is the inner life of the faith community. Paradoxically, the one thing that makes the life of the Church distinct, and ultimately attractive, to the world is the sign and experience of the cross. Not surprisingly, the authors take great pains to clarify their understanding of what it means to be the ‘community of the cross’. To them, the cross is a sign of ‘revolutionary participation in the victory of Christ’, a ‘sign of what happens when one takes God’s account of reality more seriously than Caesar’s’. Similar in some ways to Barth’s desire for the Church to reclaim its distinct biblical language to speak of God, these authors long for a Church that reclaims its distinct *life in God*. On the topic of Christian politics, they conclude with the following words; “We would like a church that again asserts that God, not nations, rules the world, that the boundaries of God’s kingdom transcend those of Caesar, and that the main political task of the church is the formation of people who see clearly the cost of discipleship and are willing to pay the price.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Christian Ethics***

#### *The Teleological Nature of Biblical Narrative*

As one can imagine, this view of the Church’s task leads to a very distinct approach to Christian ethics. They begin by addressing a possible misconception in their metaphor of Church

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<sup>15</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 46.

<sup>16</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 48.

as ‘colony’. Despite the connotations of entrenched life and guarded existence, the authors are quick to claim that life in the Christian colony is not a ‘settled affair’. In stark contrast, they in fact argue that the “...biblical story demands an offensive rather than defensive posture of the church. The world and all its resources, anguish, gifts, and groaning is God’s world, and God demands what God has created.”<sup>17</sup> This offensive requires constant movement and shifting tactics, and therefore disciples ought to be shaped for this kind of ‘adventurous journey’. In the minds of Willimon and Hauerwas, this is best enabled through learning Scripture, which they describe as ‘fundamentally a story of a people’s journey with God.’<sup>18</sup>

They go further to explain the power of narrative in this way; “Story is the fundamental means of talking about and listening to God, the only human means available to us that is complex and engaging enough to make comprehensible what it means to be with God.”<sup>19</sup> Story, ultimately, gives meaning and purpose, directing people’s lives by teaching them to ‘look back’, finding wisdom and hope in the story of what God has already done. In light of this, the authors remind us of our “baptismal responsibility to tell this story to our young, to live it before them”. The continual unfolding of God’s narrative in our lives becomes the *telos*, the goal, of discipleship; “Our fate”, they explain, “is transformed into our destiny; that is, we are given the means of transforming our past, our history of sin, into a future of love and service of neighbour.”<sup>20</sup>

### *Virtue*

This distinct journey of living out God’s story, claim the authors, requires the cultivation of certain virtues. The first of the virtues they highlight is *honesty*. Here again the authors make sure their notion of such a term is clear. Honesty, for them, implies confrontation, for disciples

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<sup>17</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 53.

<sup>19</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 54-55.

<sup>20</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 67.



are living and telling a story that is at odds with the world around them. If we do not possess the virtue of honesty, then we will quickly compromise the real gospel story in the face of cynicism and opposition. Honesty keeps us moving in the direction God intends. This is illustrated later in a later section of the book entitled, “Parish Ministry as Adventure: Learning to Enjoy Truth Telling”. The following is an excerpt:

God’s way of saving us...is thoroughly communal, and social, a creaturely means of helping people like us to be better than we could ever have been on our own; God’s way is the church. This implies that if we are ever to be saved, it will probably be through the ministrations of people like Gladys, who tell us the truth and thereby provoke us to ask what sort of church we need to enable people like us to live as we have been called.<sup>21</sup>

The second virtue the authors highlight is that of *constancy*. This virtue, they explain, is the character of endurance, the ability to not just to know in what direction to travel, but the fortitude to keep walking when the times get tough. In light of this, they make an important point regarding the nature of this virtue; “Constancy requires a particular kind of change. If we are to be true to the quest, to keep a demanding goal before ourselves, we must be people who are ready to be surprised, ready to forgive and to be forgiven.”<sup>22</sup> A more traditional term for this virtue, perhaps, is patience. The prime example of such virtue on the adventure of being God’s people is, of course, Moses who for forty years led the Israelites along a winding route through the wilderness until they fully appreciated their own distinct identity as a nation in covenant with God.

### *The Church as Basis for Christian Ethics*

“Any Christian ethical position is made credible by the church”.<sup>23</sup> This is a vital point the authors are making here, which again fundamentally challenges the politics of modern Christianity. They lament the ‘bland and unfaithful’ ethics that leads Christian to “...judge their

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<sup>21</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 129.

<sup>22</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 70.

positions, not on the basis of what is faithful to our peculiar tradition, but rather on the basis of how much Christian ethics Caesar can be induced to swallow without choking.”<sup>24</sup> Christians expect society to uphold our ethics, and so we spend vast amounts of time and money lobbying government to change the laws by which all should live. The authors raise two issues regarding this approach. First, Christian ethics can only be understood from the point of view of what we believe happened in the paschal mystery of Christ. How do we expect secular society to follow an ethic shaped by a worldview they don’t believe in? Second, the church expects society to live by its ethics with no clear example of *how* to. As a result, Willimon and Hauerwas assert the role of the church as *the* agent of Christian ethics. We cannot make abstract ethical statements and expect the world either to understand it or follow it. We need a model, and that model, they claim, is the *church*. In their words:

The most interesting, creative, political solutions we Christians have to offer our troubled society are not new laws, advice to Congress, or increased funding for social programs – although we may find ourselves supporting such national efforts. The most creative social strategy we have to offer is the church. Here we show the world a manner of life the world can never achieve through social coercion or governmental action. We serve the world by showing it something that it is not, namely, a place where God is forming a family out of strangers.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Locating the Model in Literary Context***

#### *On Theological Paradigm Shift*

Such a radically different Christian ethics must be influenced by an equally radical theology of church – although the authors certainly would argue that their view is not radical at all, but biblical. Nevertheless, they recognize the clear break they are making from the paradigm of modern Christianity, and give credit to Karl Barth for giving them their ‘theological teeth’. They claim it was Barth who “saved us from liberal Protestant assumptions that one has to

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<sup>24</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 82-83.

translate Christian language in order to have it heard.”<sup>26</sup> I already referred to their critique of Paul Tillich, who they described as the ‘most supremely apologetic theologian of our time’, for moving the flow of theological discourse the wrong way. The modern theologian begins with the culture and its worldview, and seeks to make the language of theology intelligible. Willimon and Hauerwas, however, reject the idea of some abstract ‘kernel’ of Christianity that simply needs to be translated. Instead, they follow Barth’s lead in maintaining that the integrity of theology needs to be maintained by keeping it framed in the context of the *church*. As the authors explain; “In Jesus we meet not a presentation of basic ideas about God, world, and humanity, but an invitation to join up, to become part of a movement, a people.”<sup>27</sup> It is within this radical neo-orthodoxy that Willimon and Hauerwas find theological justification for their ethics.

Interestingly enough, their critique of Barth’s new theological paradigm centers around what they call a ‘deficient ecclesiology’. They are disappointed that Barth does not offer clear direction for the church to sustain itself beyond ‘its confrontation with the Nazis’.<sup>28</sup> Barth simply provides no models for church to be church. This is where Willimon and Hauerwas suggest their work builds on Barth’s, holding up an “exemplification of Barth’s theology better than Barth could provide for himself.”<sup>29</sup> If they open up this kind of critique of Barth, it is fair to open a similar critique of their work. If Barth is deficient in ecclesiology, I contend that Willimon and Hauerwas are deficient in missiology. By their own admission, they are “admittedly not clear about the internal processes of the church that God is birthing in our midst.”<sup>30</sup> I suggest their problem runs deeper than that, which I will explain shortly in my overall critique of their model of ethics.

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<sup>26</sup> Willimon, William and Stanley Hauerwas, *Where Resident Aliens Live: exercises for Christian practice*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1996. 20. Print.

<sup>27</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 21.

*On Christian Politics*

I have already alluded to the preference the authors have toward John Howard Yoder's ecclesial typology over Niebuhr's. Both Willimon and Hauerwas acknowledge the deep influence of the Anabaptist tradition in their current thinking, and in particular Yoder, himself a devout Mennonite. In his book, *The Politics of Jesus*, he brought to the foreground the tremendous cultural insights of this long-suffering 'colony' of Christians. Going much further in their protest than the Lutherans and Calvinists, the Anabaptists rejected the Christendom alliance of church and state outright, affirming voluntary baptism and pacifist commitment as outworkings of that. Moreover, civil government (*i.e.*, 'Caesar') belongs to the world. The believer, who belongs to God's kingdom, must not fill any office, nor hold any rank under government which is to be passively obeyed.

In *The Politics of Jesus*, Yoder simply re-asserts this ethical stance in the light of our contemporary context.<sup>31</sup> His theological justification comes from his interpretation of Romans 13 in juxtaposition to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount; an interpretation he claims corrects the 'positivistic' view of government held by Lutheran Reformers, and clarifies the 'normative' view held by those in the Calvinist tradition.<sup>32</sup> In this important arena of Christian ethics, I believe Yoder does a superior job to Willimon and Hauerwas in explaining the distinct posture of Anabaptists. He explains the position in this way:

It is not the case that two imperatives are affirmed in the New Testament, obedience to government on one hand and loving the enemy on the other, between which we must choose when they contradict. Romans 12-13 and Matthew 5-7 are not in contradiction or tension. They both instruct Christians to be non-resistant in all their relationships, including the social. They both call on the disciples of Jesus to renounce participation in the interplay of egoisms which this world calls 'vengeance' or 'justice'. They both call

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<sup>31</sup> Another contemporary proponent of this ethics, coming from a very different theological tradition, is Gregory Boyd. Boyd, a conservative evangelical pastor and theologian, challenged the prevalent attitudes of the Christian right during the 2004 government elections through a series of sermons and subsequent book entitled, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers. 2006. Print.

<sup>32</sup> Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishers. 1994. 199. Print.

Christians to respect and be subject to the historical process in which the sword continues to be wielded and to bring about a kind of order under fire, but not to perceive in the wielding of the sword their own reconciling ministry.<sup>33</sup>

This raises another criticism of the model presented by Willimon and Hauerwas, which will be addressed in a moment. Before that, however, there is one more important dimension to the literary context in which Willimon and Hauerwas write that should also be highlighted.

### *On Epistemology*

By now it should be apparent that the authors have little regard for the pervasive individualism in modern philosophy, especially as it relates to Christian ethics. The authors lay the blame largely at the feet of Immanuel Kant, whose "... 'categorical imperative' underwrote the assumption that all people could be moral without training since they had available to them all they needed insofar as they were rational."<sup>34</sup> They believe this philosophy fails to offer a valid starting point for ethics, since "all ethics implies a sociology" as they attribute Alasdair MacIntyre, the influential ethicist, to saying.<sup>35</sup> Willimon and Hauerwas are concerned with arriving at a distinct sociology of the Church, which they define as "a gathered people separated from the world so that the world may know it is the world."<sup>36</sup> This in turn, they argue, requires not an abstract, universal, epistemology, but a more contingent way of knowing. Thus, say the authors; "As believers, we are called to act right, not simply because an act can be demonstrated to be universally right but because it is an act God commands. We are called to base our lives and actions on something which, to Kant, seemed woefully contingent – a Jew from Nazareth."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 210.

<sup>34</sup> Willimon, *Resident Aliens*. 98.

<sup>35</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*. 68.

<sup>36</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*. 68.

<sup>37</sup> Willimon. *Resident Aliens*. 101.

### *Critique of the Willimon-Hauerwas Model*

The value of this model of ethics is that it counters the overly 'activist' tendency within my own Episcopalian tradition, by questioning the efficacy of human action against the powers of the world, and thereby restoring the important tension to the reality of the Kingdom that Snyder identified as crucial. The challenge now is to identify where precisely those tension points lie, as William and Hauerwas certainly reveal their own biases as well. In my view there are three tension points that need to be drawn more clearly in the model.

Spirit versus matter: The strength of this model is its clear identity of the church and its source of knowledge and authority. The deficiency of this model, as I mentioned, is its distorted image of the world as being held captive by the enemy with little hope of redemption (with a few 'exceptions'). Thus, they suggest little reason to invest in the social and cultural realities of the world. This, of course, is deeply problematic, if we were to take seriously the biblical notion of redemption. Where the Episcopalian tradition becomes an important corrective to this view, is the centrality of the Incarnation in its theology. God's act of incarnating his very self in creation removes the theological 'spirit-matter' divide, or the ethical 'church-world' divide, and leaves us coming to terms with what Bonhoeffer described as a thoroughly 'secular Christ'.<sup>38</sup> In other words, we must come to terms with Christ having come into the world *as is*, in all its moral faultiness, and our ethics need to allow for the ambiguity that will inevitably arise from following the Incarnate Lord into the 'mess' of it all.

Gradual versus Climactic: Consistent at least with their teleological view of ethics, it is clear that for Willimon and Hauerwas, the discussion of how the church should behave today begins at the end of history. Their ethical language is unapologetically militant, for they are "deeply sympathetic with the apocalyptic imagery of the New Testament".<sup>39</sup> From their

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<sup>38</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom*. Eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and Burton Nelson. New York: HarperCollins. 1995, 87. Print.

<sup>39</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 34.

perspective, there is a real enemy at war with God, and the agents of that war are the 'nations' and 'empires' of the world that "derive their authority from promising to do good for us if we will behave as cooperative citizens." Against this false agenda, the task of the church is to "expose the pretensions of those nations and empires as the enemy."<sup>40</sup>

I believe their skewed view of redemption is a result of this hyper-apocalyptic bent to their reading of history. As Snyder points out, neither the Gospels nor the rest of the New Testament are clear on what the end times mean.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the timeline itself is not clear. Willimon and Hauerwas seem to adopt a Pauline view of history for our own contemporary context, which I think is problematic. There may very well be a chance that we have more time to work things out in the world than what Paul initially thought, if the last two thousand years provides any insight to us. In other words, Christians have time to take risks and make mistakes in their effort at being agents of transformation in the world.

Divine action versus human action: It is this perspective, I believe, that gives merit to the work of Christians in transforming the structures and systems of the world. Martin Luther King, for example, was concerned with changing law and policy, because I am sure as a Baptist minister he recognized that transformation of social institutions was part of the Church's mandate. It would be difficult for Willimon and Hauerwas to argue the merit of King's work. Perhaps a better case for the complexity of Christian witness in the world is William Wilberforce. Here is a person who devoted himself, as a politician, to the reform of civil government in the hope of fostering a just and compassionate society. This example of Christian vocation does not factor into the Willimon-Hauerwas model of ethics, largely because of their cynical attitude toward systems wielded by powers outside of the church.<sup>42</sup> The success of our calling is not up to us though, but God alone. *We* are called to be faithful in proclaiming good news to the poor and

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<sup>40</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 52-53.

setting the captives free – and this inevitably entails seeking to transform systems of structural power. The Bible constantly reminds us that the sovereignty of God extends into the activity of the world. There are legitimate occasions when Christians can work in the world to witness that. Joseph found himself as a chief civil servant for Pharaoh - and as a result relieved poverty and enabled foreigners to find refuge in the land.

We need a Christian ethic that allows disciples to rely on the gifts of grace and forgiveness in our service to the Kingdom. The challenge Willimon and Hauerwas present, is how to live our respective vocations in the moral complexity of our culture without getting lost. Beginning with a deep devotion to the distinct *polis* of the Church is very good advice.

### ***Applying the Model***

In light of the above comments, there are three things that I intend to take away from their model and apply to this project.

### ***Maintaining the Identity of the Church***

It is not a contradiction, I believe, for the church to define itself as a countercultural community while participating in the reality of the world as redemptive agents of God's Kingdom. In fact, what enables a disciple to function with any effectiveness is precisely his or her clear identity as a member of the mystical body of Christ, a chosen 'co-heir' of the Kingdom. I agree with Willimon and Hauerwas that the church's most credible form of witness to the world remains the "creation of a living, breathing, visible community of faith". For this reason, this project of developing a curriculum for holistic kingdom ethics will also give attention to how concertedly disciples practice the disciplines of faith within the church. Here I will borrow from the popular works of Richard Foster and Dallas Willard to properly identify those key practices of 'inner' church life.



*Practices of Adventurous Christians*

While we may debate the exact *telos* of the adventure to which we are called, few would argue with the metaphor of discipleship as a journey. Regardless of the terrain, there are important *practices* a traveler must follow, in order to effectively reach whatever the destination may be. In other words, while the destination is determined by theology, the ability to reach the destination is a result of the *character* of the church, which is shaped by these practices - or what the authors have also called *virtues*. Willimon and Hauerwas provide an interesting list worth keeping in mind:

**Figure 1: Practices for the Adventurous Christian<sup>43</sup>**

Baptism	Community	confession
Conversion	Courage	Naming enemies
Eschatological concern	Eucharistic prayer	Faithful action
Fasting	Fighting	friendship
Giving to the poor	'homelessness'	martyrdom
Nonviolence	Obedience	oddness
Suffering	Prayer/speaking rightly	Political resistance
Sanctification	Sexual fidelity	Sin
Story (narrative)	Tribal	truthful
Worship		

*The Power of Story*

One of the most poignant lessons emerging for the exploration of this model, is the vital role story-telling plays in the life of the Church. What strikes me is how the effectiveness of story-telling in discipleship is often under-estimated, while at the same time the church's familiarity with God's story is often over-estimated. Therefore, I plan to shape the learning as much as I can in narrative form. I will have people listen to, and share, ancient and contemporary stories of how God transforms lives.

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<sup>43</sup> Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 124.

## The Stassen-Gushee Model of Kingdom Ethics: *Transformative Agents of God's Reign*

### Overview

The other model of kingdom ministry I am focusing on in this study was also developed and published through a collaborative effort, by Glen Stassen and David Gushee. Stassen is an accomplished professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, and a well-known advocate of peace and the abolition of war. Stassen enlisted Gushee, a former student, to help write an impressive work entitled, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Similar to Hauerwas and Willimon, Stassen and Gushee write with a deeply critical eye on the state of the North American church. In the preface they write; "...it is no overstatement to claim that the evasion of the teachings of Jesus constitutes a crisis of Christian identity and raises the question of who exactly is functioning as the Lord of the church." They go on to explain:

Our purpose is to reclaim Jesus Christ for Christian ethics and for the moral life of the churches...in the process we also intend to recover the Sermon on the Mount for Christian ethics...Jesus taught that as his disciples obey him and practice what he taught and lived, they participate in the reign of God that Jesus inaugurated during his earthly ministry and that will reach its climax when he comes again.<sup>44</sup>

The authors set out right away to establish the kingdom of God as the "heart of [Jesus'] proclamation and self-understanding",<sup>45</sup> as well as the meaning of the kingdom of God being grounded in the Old Testament. For them the tie is most closely made to the "deliverance passages" of the prophet Isaiah. By exploring Isaiah as the basis for Jesus' language of the kingdom of God, they identified several themes which frame Jesus' own teaching and ministry. These themes are; 'deliverance/salvation', 'righteousness/justice', 'peace', 'joy', 'God's presence', 'healing', 'return from exile'.<sup>46</sup> Their research supports the argument that Jesus' understanding of the 'kingdom of God' was not only holistic in nature, but that his Jewish culture

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<sup>44</sup> Stassen, Glen and David Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: following Jesus in contemporary Context*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press. 2003. 11. Print

<sup>45</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 25.

would also have interpreted it as such. (In fact, so grounded was the Jewish culture's understanding of the kingdom as divine and immediate intervention into the political and social realm of history, that Jesus' emphasis on the less obvious manifestation of the kingdom was quite evidently what confused the minds of the religious rulers.<sup>47</sup>)

Stassen and Gushee attempt to outline an ethic for this holistic view of the kingdom by highlighting its broad themes within the beatitudes themselves. Through an exegesis of each verse they identify the seven marks of God's reign (listed above). They then take the 'shape of the drama of the reign of God' and frame the character of the 'blessed' in such a way that they fit into this unfolding drama. Within this framework, Stassen and Gushee go on to develop a distinct 'holistic character ethics'.<sup>48</sup> What makes Jesus' ethics distinct from other moral ethics, they argue, is the larger narrative which continually shapes it. "In biblical character ethics", they explain, "the good we serve is the reign of God".<sup>49</sup> They develop the ethical framework in three parts; first is the rationale for such an ethic, second is the structure or 'dimensions' of the ethics, and third is the key concept of 'transforming initiatives' at the heart of this ethical framework. I will briefly expound upon each of these parts, and then assess the value of this particular model in developing holistic mindsets for ministry among disciples today.

### ***Rationale for Holistic Character Ethics***

Stassen and Gushee summarize the argument of Joseph Kotva for character ethics in three points. First; "...we need character ethics because of *the widespread sense of moral decline*."<sup>50</sup> The authors largely attribute the moral decline of North American culture to the pervasive ideology of Enlightenment liberalism, which "...failed to nurture the kind of character

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<sup>47</sup> Luke 17:20; 19:11-27. See also, Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 28-29; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *International Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 3: K-P*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing. 1986. 28. Print.

<sup>48</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 55ff.

<sup>49</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 57.

needed for constitutional democracy to function in a healthy way.”<sup>51</sup> Second; “...we need character ethics because of the *‘historical consciousness’ of our time.*”<sup>52</sup> In this time of global encounter and cultural diversity we need to function with greater adaptability. Therefore, “Character ethics moves the focus from rules and acts to agents and their contexts.”<sup>53</sup> The third rationale for adopting an ethic based on character is that; “...most modern individualistic and rationalistic ethical theories lack attention to the *formative influences of friendship, discipleship to mentors and bodily emotions.*”<sup>54</sup>

For Stassen and Gushee this is a particularly strong point. Character ethics reflects much more closely the kind of discipleship that Jesus himself practiced; a deeply relational discipleship of the rabbinic tradition.<sup>55</sup> As a result, the authors are concerned about developing an ethic that takes into account the ‘embodied self’. They thus propose the notion of ‘incarnational discipleship’, and explain it as such; “Ethics as incarnational discipleship points to the *incarnate Jesus, who taught the Sermon on the Mount and the Kingdom of God, in the tradition of the prophets of Israel, embodied it in his practices and called us to embody it in our practices of discipleship. This Jesus is our Lord.*”<sup>56</sup> The idea of the lordship of Jesus cannot, in character ethics, remain an abstract doctrine or principle. Rather, it is a profound *relational* claim that impacts all aspects of life, not just where it is chosen to be applied.

### ***The Four Dimensions of Character Ethics***

Following this rationale, the authors build their structure for character ethics on four essential ‘dimensions’; ‘passions/loyalties’, ‘perceptions’, ‘way of reasoning’ and ‘basic convictions’. They go on to explain:

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<sup>51</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 58.

<sup>54</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 58.

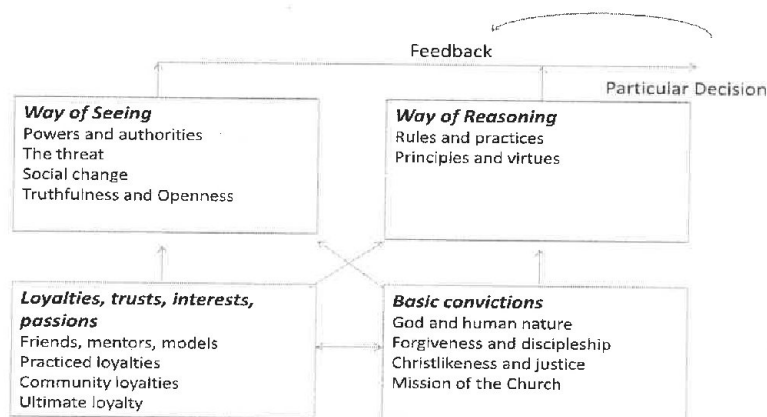
<sup>55</sup> Wilkins, Michael. *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship*. Zondervan Publishers. 1992. 93. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 58-59.

If an ethic lacks explicit attention to any of these dimensions, it either lacks the ability to take a clear stand on concrete ethical issues, or it takes the stand naively, unaware of and uncritical about its own crucial assumptions. It lacks the power to detect errors and weaknesses in that dimension of character, to know where to repent and change. It is like a soldier who rushes into battle with his helmet but forgets his sword and shield.<sup>57</sup>

Below is a diagram of their structure for a biblical character ethic<sup>58</sup>:

**Figure 2: The Four Dimensions of Character**



The next question would be, ‘How does this structure work? How does it ensure that a holistic character ethic is, in fact, nurtured and sustained?’ The authors argue that each dimension brings a critical step to the process of developing holistic biblical character.

### 1) ‘Way of Reasoning’

In this step the authors argue that; “Character requires consistency, and character without reason is likely to be highly inconsistent.”<sup>59</sup> At the same time, they also argue that reason ‘does not function autonomously’, but is ‘undertaken through and with habits of mind and heart we

<sup>57</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 59.

<sup>59</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 59.

fundamental worldview and thus straying from our loyalty to Jesus Christ. Worldview (basic convictions) helps shape character, and character overflows into action.<sup>64</sup>

### 3) 'Passions/Loyalties'

The authors argue; "To deny the place of passions in human life is to succumb to a vast illusion."<sup>65</sup> Instead, a vital step in holistic character ethics is to 'foster morally praise-worthy passions', as they credit Simon Harak for saying.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, regarding our loyalties, one must walk with a deeper awareness of where they truly lie. The authors identify four levels of loyalty; a) friends, mentors, models, b) practices and means, c) communities, and d) God (or ultimate loyalty).<sup>67</sup> In a similar vein, regarding *interests*, when they are aligned with God's interests, "...we will be able to reason more like Jesus did and move toward Christlikeness."<sup>68</sup>

### 4) 'Way of Seeing'

Related to *interest*, but in a larger way, is the dimension of ethics that takes into account how one *perceives* and *interprets* any given information. The authors argue that "...the different ways people see what is happening shapes the ethical action that they advocate as much or more than how they reason morally."<sup>69</sup> They identify four variables that shape one's perception of ethical issues; 1) view of power and authority (high or low), 2) threat perception (causes of wrongdoing), 3) understanding of strategies for social change, 4) information integrity: truthfulness (openness to evidence).<sup>70</sup> Drawing these variables together, the authors summarize the importance of perception in their ethical model in a compelling way (while quite appropriately locating the vision of holistic character ethics in the words of the prophet Jeremiah):

A holistic character ethic needs to develop a self-critical understanding of how we perceive authority, change, threat and truthfulness in our society. Without that, Christians

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<sup>64</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 63.

<sup>65</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 63.

<sup>66</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 63.

<sup>67</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 64.

<sup>68</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 64.

<sup>69</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 65.

<sup>70</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 66-67.

will not understand how to act effectively to 'seek the shalom of the city where you dwell' (Jer 29.7). They will emigrate inwardly into small enclaves of self-fulfillment. Their ethics will ignore powerful influences in the society that shape people's character and will lack the antidotes with which to correct secular ideologies. They will not know how to share in God's compassion for the mistreated. They will naively support an unjust status quo. They will have an ethics that focuses only on philosophical or theological generalities, or only on individualistic virtues, and act as if God is Lord only of theological doctrines, or of the private, individual life, and not of the power structures and struggles for justice. Those who do not understand the causative forces in society are condemned to repeat yesterday's injustices tomorrow.<sup>71</sup>

### *Transforming Initiatives*

To this end, Stassen and Gushee offer a very helpful concept called, 'transforming initiatives.' Transforming initiatives are those practices Jesus teaches in the Sermon, which enable people to participate in the redemptive reality of the Kingdom. Their study of the Sermon identifies a problem in the traditional interpretation of a dyadic pattern to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. They believe there is actually a triadic pattern to each of them. In analysing this pattern, they argue that the emphasis should be on the third part of each passage, where the use of imperatives stands out. This third part almost always follows what they describe as Jesus' reference to a 'vicious cycle'. Like a doctor who diagnoses the cause of an illness, Jesus diagnoses the cause of unjust outcomes. First, Jesus names the error then calls people to repentance. Next, Jesus calls people to participate in what the authors describe as, "the transforming initiative, the new practice, the corrective pattern of behaviour, the way of deliverance from captivity to the vicious cycle."<sup>72</sup> The following is an example of this three-fold teaching pattern:

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<sup>71</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 75-76.

<sup>72</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 137.

**Figure 3: Three-fold Teaching Pattern**

Traditional Righteousness	Vicious Cycle	Transforming Initiative
Matthew 5:38: You have heard it said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'	Matthew 5:39: But I say to you, do not retaliate revengefully by evil means. (Not an imperative in the Greek, but an infinitive – probably with implied imperatival meaning).	Matthew 5:40-42: But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse one who would borrow from you.

By pointing out that the emphasis of Jesus' teaching lies not in the "alleged idealistic prohibition"<sup>73</sup>, the authors believe they have "...taken a major step in overcoming the 'hard teachings and high ideals' interpretation that has caused evasion of the Sermon. We have begun to see how the Sermon on the Mount consists of transforming initiatives that give real, practical, grace-based guidance for Christian ethics."<sup>74</sup>

### ***Setting the Model in Literary Context***

#### ***On Interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount***

Stassen and Gushee point out, that in the first century of the early church the Sermon on the Mount was the primary text for teaching disciples. Two factors changed the use and interpretation of this core text; 1) the increasing influence of Greek philosophy in Christian thought, and 2) a related move of the Church to a more central place in society.<sup>75</sup> What resulted over the centuries was a dualistic and consequently spiritualized interpretation of the Sermon,

<sup>73</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 141.

<sup>75</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 128-129.



evidenced in the work of such prominent theologians as Martin Luther.<sup>76</sup> This in turn has compartmentalized Jesus' teaching, "as meant for attitudes but not actions, or for repentance but not obedience".<sup>77</sup> Jesus' moral teachings are largely seen to be appealing to people's ability to endure great sacrifice in order to receive the Kingdom. The ethical problem of this interpretation, argues Stassen, is that; "It causes feelings of guilt and resistance. So the more we emphasize these teachings as ideals to live up to, the guiltier we feel. Therefore, we ignore or evade Jesus' teachings."<sup>78</sup>

For this reason, explain Stassen and Gushee, the Sermon on the Mount is largely left out of discussion on Christian ethics. Even Bonhoeffer in his famous, *Ethics*, rarely makes reference to Jesus' Sermon, who was left to look elsewhere for practical guidance in confronting issues of injustice.<sup>79</sup> Stassen and Gushee seek to correct this misinterpretation by reframing the text in a biblical Jewish holistic view of the kingdom of God. From this view, the reader is compelled to move beyond a 'passive understanding' of Christian ethics, and toward "a hermeneutic of grace-based, active participation in eschatological deliverance that begins now."<sup>80</sup> In light of this historical context, their development of the concept of 'transforming initiatives' around Jesus' Sermon teachings can indeed be appreciated as a critically important contribution to the task of reclaiming the biblical notion of discipleship for today's church.

### *On Virtue*

In contrast, the attempt by Stassen and Gushee to present their theory of 'character ethics' as unique is not as compelling. While they suggest to be building on unique principles, their premises closely resemble those of the more familiar school of virtue ethics. In fact, there seems to be little sense among the broader circle of scholars that a real distinction between character and

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<sup>76</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 130.

<sup>77</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 133.

<sup>78</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 144.

<sup>80</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 143.

virtue ethics exists.<sup>81</sup> Stassen and Gushee, however, take pains to distinguish their approach from that, at least, of the popular brand of Aristotelian virtue ethics, which leaves ‘virtue’ too ambivalent a concept. First, if virtues are defined as ‘those character qualities that make that person a good person in community’<sup>82</sup>, it begs the question, ‘what is the community ultimately using to measure virtue?’ This brings us to their real issue; the problem of interpreting the Beatitudes as purely an ethics of virtue. Discipleship based purely on virtue ignores the real basis for God’s kingdom activity in the world. They argue; “An ethics of virtue must be subordinated to God’s grace and deliverance, justice and righteousness, peace and presence. Virtues are only a part of the larger drama...”<sup>83</sup>

Virtues, they argue, are not ‘morally neutral’, but are also influenced by a larger cultural narrative.<sup>84</sup> We come to recognize virtues by the continual discernment of our actions according to the desired outcomes. Thus, the authors explain, “character ethicists focus on the development of the kind of character that guides our reasoning aright”.<sup>85</sup> While certainly a good principle, it is not really foreign to virtue ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre, a leading virtue ethics theorist, clearly emphasizes the importance of the social context (‘ethos’) in virtue ethics as well, and places even greater emphasis than Stassen and Gushee on the role of ‘tradition’ (in the sense of ‘historical narrative’) in the crucial shaping of the community’s ‘telos’ (moral purpose).<sup>86</sup>

At any rate, there is much in this work worthy of adopting. In particular, with regards to this project, their research was very helpful in more clearly defining the *character* of a redemptive Christian, and the *transformational* practices of one who is seeking first the Kingdom

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<sup>81</sup> Oakley, Justin. “Varieties of Virtue Ethics”, *Ratio: An international journal of analytic philosophy*. Volume 9, Issue 2. Sept 1996. 128-152. Print.

<sup>82</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 37.

<sup>84</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 51-52.

<sup>85</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 60.

<sup>86</sup> Murphy, Mark. *Alasdair MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003. 193. Print.

of God in the world. I would like to outline a few ways I intend to use these elements of their model for my project.

### ***Applying the Model to the Project***

#### *The Character of a Redemptive Christian*

The redemptive model of ministry identifies character as a central area of development. Thus, It is important to clearly identify what *characteristics* shape a redemptive Christian. Stassen and Gushee offer the following characteristics based their study of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where they believe Jesus mostly clearly defines what it means to act in a way that is consistent with service to God's reign:

humble before God, and identifies with the humble, the poor, and the outcasts  
 mourns with sincere repentance toward God, and comforts others who mourn  
 is surrendered to God, following God's way, and making peace  
 hungers and thirsts for delivering, community-restoring justice  
 practices compassion in action, covenant faithfulness toward those in need  
 seeks God's will with holistic integrity, in being and doing  
 makes peace with enemies, as God shows love to God's enemies  
 shows willingness to suffer (just as Jesus suffered) because of loyalty to Jesus and to justice.<sup>87</sup>

A person, then, with a 'holistic mindset' for redemptive ministry will understand and show consistent evidence of these characteristics in their lives.

#### *Method of Character Development*

Returning to the four dimensions of character, I have translated their diagram of character development into four distinct dimensions of growth in holistic discipleship. The curriculum will essentially be centered around the process of growth in these four dimensions:

1. Develop 'a way of seeing' (use of social analysis)
2. Develop 'a way of reasoning' (use of spiritual disciplines and virtues)
3. Develop 'loyalties' and 'passions' (use of experience and self-reflection)
4. Develop 'basic convictions', ie. worldview (use of theology)

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<sup>87</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 47.

The designed model will be consistent with the authors' methodology, in that Stassen and Gushee rightly frame the whole process of ethics as more organic than a strictly sequential hierarchy of thought. Not that there remains no logic to the process. In fact, even organic growth follows a sequential pattern – but allows for variance to the process. In addition to this, Stassen and Gushee raise two important methodological issues which will be taken into account in developing this project. First, regarding the source of authority in developing the 'basic convictions' (from which most other dimensions flow), after careful study the authors re-affirm the central place of Scripture in developing holistic ethics. More so, they affirm Jesus' role as the authority in the *interpretation* of Scripture. Without doing justice to the insightful comments in this section of their study, the authors suggest the following hermeneutic:

1. Look first to Jesus – examining his incarnation/death/resurrection and his life/ministry/teachings.
2. Read all other Scriptures through the prophetic interpretive grid that Jesus employed and in light of all that we know of Jesus' witness on this issue.
3. Then look to other sources of authority for help on the basis of the same interpretive grid, remembering that Jesus is alive and continues to instruct his church through the witness of the Holy Spirit (Jn 15).<sup>88</sup>

In the chapter, 'The Form and Function of Moral Norms', the second methodological issue they address is how the method itself will shape our ethics. Essentially, the key issue here is one of clearly communicating the level to which people can expect character ethics to engage the societal issues.<sup>89</sup> Here again, I go right to their point:

The church's moral task is not primarily to come up with the right beliefs about issues like euthanasia or peacemaking, and then make sure that every member holds these right beliefs. Nor is it to come up with the right set of timeless virtues and hope that every member will be virtuous. Instead, our central task is to discern which specific practices fit the kingdom of God and which attributes of community character are appropriate and fitting for people whose lives are surrendered to God. We want above all to be useful servants of the reign of God, and thus with all our heart we seek to discern and then to put into practice a total way of life that advances God's kingdom.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 97.

<sup>89</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 99-100.

<sup>90</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 122.

This issue they raise is particularly helpful in clarifying the outcomes that should be expected for this project, which seeks to develop Christians who have a ‘holistic mindset’ for redemptive ministry. It further reinforces the importance of developing a clear biblical worldview based on Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom of God, for that is the essential source of informing and shaping our character. It is at the level of our most basic and fundamental convictions that our actions should speak. In the words of the authors, just as Jesus Christ was the ‘embodied drama’ of God, so the church should be.<sup>91</sup>

### ***The Transformational Practices of a Redemptive Christian***

#### *Telos of Character Ethics*

In light of the above comments, it is important to be able to state clearly what worldview, or ‘basic convictions’, are informing one’s ethics. In simple terms one could ask, ‘What is the purpose of my actions?’ ‘What, ultimately, am I trying to accomplish?’ This, in philosophical terms, is the *telos*, or goal, of ethics. For Stassen and Gushee the Christian worldview has its *telos* firmly grounded in the kingdom of God. In their words; “‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God’ is clearly concerned about a good end. Jesus presents a goal – verily, *the* goal – for which all Christians are to strive, and he sets us to work pursuing that goal.”<sup>92</sup> In relating this to ministry development, what enables a person to grow his or her character for *redemptive* influence (defined as the power to enable transformation in others) is a clear understanding that, as Stassen and Gushee point out, “the good we serve is the reign of God.”

#### *Transforming Initiatives*

Stassen and Gushee’s ethics move us beyond the paralysis of the ‘vicious cycle’, and through ‘grace-based participation’ in kingdom-oriented ministry we experience our lives being

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<sup>91</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 124.

<sup>92</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 121.

of deeper redemptive influence. These transforming initiatives must be clearly identified and understood. These transforming initiatives will be the measurements of participating at a *transformational* level of public ministry. Therefore, considerable time will be spent studying these teaching of Jesus in the curriculum. The authors provide a table of the fourteen 'triads', or transforming initiatives, which Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>93</sup>

**Figure 4: The Fourteen Sermon Triads - Stassen and Gushee**

Traditional Righteousness	Vicious Cycle	Transforming Initiative
1. You shall not kill	Being angry, or saying, You fool!	Go, be reconciled
2. You shall not commit adultery	Looking with lust is adultery in the heart	Remove the cause of temptation (cf. Mk 9.43-50)
3. Whoever divorces, give a certificate	Divorcing involves you in adultery	(Be reconciled: 1 Cor 7:11)
4. You shall not swear falsely	Swearing by anything involves you in a false claim	Let your yes be yes, and your no be no
5. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth	Retaliating violently or revengefully, by evil means	Turn the other cheek, give your tunic and cloak, go the second mile, give to beggar and borrower
6. Love neighbour and hate enemy	Hating enemies is the same vicious cycle that you see in the Gentiles and tax collectors	Love enemies, pray for your persecutors; be all-inclusive as your Father in heaven is
7. When you give alms,	Practicing righteousness for show	But give in secret, and your Father will reward you
8. When you pray,	Practicing righteousness for show	But pray in secret, and your Father will reward you
9. When you pray,	Heaping up empty phrases	Therefore pray like this: Our Father...
10. When you fast,	Practicing righteousness for show	But dress with joy, and your Father will reward you
11. Do not pile up treasures on earth (cp. Luke 12:16-31)	Moth and rust destroy, and thieves enter and steal	But pile up treasures in heaven
12. No one can serve two masters	Serving God and wealth, worrying about food and clothes	But seek first God's reign and God's justice/righteousness

<sup>93</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 142.

**Figure 4: The Fourteen Sermon Triads - Stassen and Gushee (continued)**

Traditional Righteousness	Vicious Cycle	Transforming Initiative
13. Do not judge, lest you be judged	Judging others means you'll be judged by the same measure	First take the log out of your own eye
14. Do not give holy things to dogs, nor pearls to pigs	They will trample them and tear you to pieces	Give your trust in prayer to your Father in heaven

These will be explored in depth through the curriculum in order to firmly orient people to the redemptive way of Jesus.

### Summary Evaluation of Models

Both groups of authors react strongly to the ongoing influence of liberal Enlightenment philosophy in North American Christian thought. They emphasize the nature of ethics being shaped by a *telos*, or goal, which is informed by the Biblical narrative of the Kingdom of God, and developed in and through the distinct *polis*, or ethos, of the Church. The most distinguishing mark of Christian ethics, they claim in unison, are the virtues, or character, of its adherents. Interestingly enough, though, there is a fairly marked difference between the two groups of authors regarding their view of the significance of Christian character. For Willimon and Hauerwas, the distinct nature of the Church is itself the countercultural reality of the Kingdom in the midst of the world. Stassen and Gushee, however, are far more interested in the *transformational influence* of Christian character over the world. For these authors, the task of discipleship is not only to develop a church with a distinct identity from the world, but to equip disciples to be servants of the Kingdom in the world.

This reveals the inevitable tensions that arise when seeking to define the Kingdom of God, as Snyder pointed out. Both groups of authors see a different relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God. On a related issue, they also differ as to the extent to which the

Church ought to participate in the world. Much of this, I believe, stems from their different hermeneutic of history and Scripture. Stassen and Gushee's interpretation of Christ and his Sermon on the Mount flow from an Old Testament prophetic interpretation of history. Willimon and Hauerwas, on the other hand, are deeply influenced by an eschatological reading of the New Testament, including an apocalyptic view of history. If we were to use the diagram by Stassen and Gushee to analyse these views, we would recognize that these basic convictions of history naturally shape the outcome of their ethics.

In light of that, it is vitally important we return to the biblical view of redemption explored in chapter two. If this interpretation of the biblical notions of 'gaal' and 'padah' are accurate, and if the presumption is correct that this interpretation was the one understood by Jesus and his Jewish apostles as the good news of God's reign was being proclaimed, then I would argue that one ought to lean toward the prophetic tradition that Stassen and Gushee adopt in understanding the way in which the Church is to seek the kingdom of God in the world. The church, if I were to try to put it succinctly, is *a community that is intentionally cultivating the character of its members to fulfill its goal, which is to be effective signs and servants of the Kingdom of God in the world*. Willimon and Hauerwas contribute to this task by bringing to the forefront the vital tension between the Church, and the world it seeks to serve. The Church must always return to the basis of its own ethics, which is the belief in what happened in the paschal mystery of Christ. Only by its ongoing practice of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ in the world, can the virtues of Christ be cultivated in the Church.

### **Principles Revealed for Curriculum Development**

The comparative study of the two important ethical models above reveal some important principles to follow in developing a curriculum for holistic ministry formation. First, the notion of discipleship needs to be clearly framed in a social context. Both the purpose of discipleship and the nature of personal growth demands an intentional participation in community. The curriculum



will need to foster such participation in order to cultivate the kind of characteristics consistent with kingdom living. Second, discipleship is, in fact, praxis. For the purpose of this project, this has two implications. One, the curriculum needs to equip disciples to read the gospels as less a doctrinal text and more as a practical guide to the spiritual life. Subsequently, it would benefit participants by structuring the curriculum around a clear ethical framework in order to orient their mindset toward a practical view of discipleship. The challenge will be to ground this framework clearly in the context of grace, so as not to reduce the practice of discipleship to a works-righteousness. Finally, the purpose of discipleship needs to be clarified through the course of the formation process by emphasizing the prophetic tradition inherent in Jesus' teaching of the redemptive reign of God. Inherent in discipleship is the call to engage society with a prophetic vision of an alternative reality, which necessarily confronts people with the transforming power of God in Christ. Based on the study of the above ethical models, one must make explicit the objective of preparing participants to intentionally practice transformative actions in the world. This, essentially, is what is meant by 'kingdom living'.

But by what process do we effectively cultivate such character within today's disciples? We now move to the next chapter which addresses this very issue.

## PROJECT DESIGN

### **The Goal of the Curriculum**

The purpose for this curriculum, as stated earlier, is to enable Christians to understand more clearly, and to practice more intentionally, the true nature of God's redemptive reign which we have been called to witness and serve. It is an attempt to foster a *holistic redemptive vision* for ministry, one which will ground our Christian vocation in the transformational activity of the Holy Spirit in the world. The following pages outline a framework for a curriculum designed to offer every disciple a deeper biblical understanding of God's redemptive reign, a clear process of holistic growth, and a set of right practices to follow in each dimension of growth, regardless of their particular vocation. At the end of the day, the goal is to see disciples become committed, compassionate, and discerning agents of God's transformative reign.

### **Description of Participants and Learning Environment**

There are three 'test groups' I am planning to use for the evaluation of this curriculum project. I will briefly describe each of them:

#### ***Test Group 1: Trinity Church, Mississauga***

Being of my former congregation of Trinity Church, in an upper-middle class neighbourhood in suburban Toronto, this group represents a stable and relatively healthy congregation. The participants will have, to various degrees, participated in comprehensive discipleship programs, including small group ministries. The congregation would be identified as evangelical in theology, and relatively conservative socially and politically. For reasons that will be explained later, while approximately 70 people participated in the curriculum, the feedback of six participants were used for the evaluation of the curriculum.

### ***Test Group 2: St. Anne's, Toronto***

In my current ministry setting, there are two very distinct congregations. The participants in Group 2 represent the congregation that existed prior to my arrival. In fact its history dates back more than 150 years, and lives under the shadow of an historic era of church planting and innovative ministry. After many years of neglect, the congregation now is made of a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, largely low and middle income, and disproportionately elderly in age. They identify themselves as liberals, both in theology and social and political views. Discipleship programs have not been a priority for their ministry in the last years, most expressing a lack of interest due to living quite a distance from the church and not wanting to attend weekly meetings. The 6 participants of this group all happened to live in the neighbourhood.

### ***Test Group 3: The Jeremiah Community, Toronto***

Members of the new church plant community constituted the third test group. This community is planted in the St. Anne's parish, and uses the same worship space as the traditional congregation for their various gatherings. Much of their identity, however, is shaped by their community life outside of the church walls, leading after-school programs, eco-projects, refugee ministries, and arts initiatives in the neighbourhood. The 9 participants reflect the younger demographic; mostly artists or university students, young parents, or new professionals. While the majority came with a Christian background and fairly extensive ministry experience, few would identify themselves with any denominational tradition, preferring such terms as 'post-evangelical' or 'ex-Catholic' or 'follower of Christ'. That being said, the group holds diverse theological views, and equally diverse social and political views, even in light of their common commitment to intentional community and service to others.

As one can see by the description, the diversity of these groups provides a valuable testing environment for this curriculum. As has been mentioned, one of the key objectives for this

project was to develop a basic framework for discipleship that was both biblical and logical so that any Christian, regardless of background or sense of vocation, could find relevant and useful for their own development.

### **The Content of the Curriculum**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I found the concept of the ‘four dimensions of character’ in the Stassen-Gushee model of ethics to be useful in constructing a curriculum for holistic character formation. Taking each of the dimensions as areas for growth and development, the outline will look something like this:

1. Cultivate ‘loyalties’ and ‘passions’ (use of experience and values clarification)
2. Cultivate ‘basic convictions’, ie. worldview (use of theology)
3. Cultivate ‘a way of seeing’ (practice of social analysis)
4. Cultivate ‘a way of reasoning’ (use of spiritual disciplines and virtues)

In this section, I will explore insights relating to each of these dimensions that, in turn, can be used in creating lesson plans. Particular attention has been given to material that explores pedagogy in the context of social transformation.

### ***Cultivating Commitment: Issues of ‘Practiced Loyalties’***

Bruce Main, president of UrbanPromise, an inner-city holistic youth ministry in Camden, New Jersey, recently spoke of three ‘roadblocks’ that get in the way of Christians engaging work of social transformation; fear, indifference, and ‘misguided theology’. I will address the issue of theology while exploring the next dimension of the framework. The first two roadblocks to engagement that Main speaks of though, does raise the issue of commitment in relation to ethics, which Stassen and Gushee describe as ‘practiced loyalties’.

Main begins by describing the predictable fearful reactions he gets from suburbanites regarding the prospect of engaging inner city neighbourhoods. He then quickly moves on to analyse the source of that fear, which at its most basic level is a natural response to a perceived threat. It is, as Main describes it, “our biological and psychological makeup that triggers our

deepest human need to survive.”<sup>1</sup> It is this unchecked, natural motivation towards survival, that enables our fears to “control our actions, our thoughts, our faith”.<sup>2</sup> But fear, of course, is not the motivation God had in mind for life. Main addresses the issue in this way:

The core of the Christian faith reminds us that self-preservation is not our highest calling, especially since one of the most common phrases in the Bible is ‘fear not’ (over 350 times!). Jesus told his followers that to save one’s life is really to lose it, and to lose one’s life is really to gain it. If there is a consistent message from Jesus to his followers, it is what we are called to ‘die’ to our deepest human needs. Our life is not our own, and God will be with us wherever we go...if we are going to be active road crossers we must confront this roadblock called fear...if we do not rise to this challenge, our potential for growth will be significantly stunted and God’s movement in the world will be diminished.<sup>3</sup>

The other ‘roadblock’ to engaging God’s world in mission is indifference. Again, trying to get to the heart of why people are indifferent, Main alludes to people’s presupposition of ‘holiness’ being the point of religion. Holiness puts ‘setting yourself apart’ as a virtue, which means staying undefiled and pure from the world. The ‘dos and don’ts’ of religion become the important statements of faith. Tragically, that limits our moral vision. Main recounts the moving testimony of Elie Wiesel, a WWII concentration camp survivor, who claimed the real tragedy of the holocaust was that ‘good people did nothing’. Wiesel would later remark that the cause of indifference is a result of believing his or her neighbour as, ultimately, of ‘no consequence’ to their own well-being.<sup>4</sup> This leads Main to ask a very relevant question for this study; “So how can Christians move beyond our all too-frequent attitude of indifference to become people who are compelled to challenge injustice? How do Christians move from being people whose highest calling in life is not self-preservation but rather concern for others?”<sup>5</sup>

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Print. <sup>1</sup> Main, Bruce. *Why Jesus Crossed the Road*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers. 2010, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Main, *Why Jesus Crossed the Road*, 110.

<sup>3</sup> Main, *Why Jesus Crossed the Road*, 111.

<sup>4</sup> Main, *Why Jesus Crossed the Road*, 123.

<sup>5</sup> Main, *Why Jesus Crossed the Road*, 126.

Jesus' brilliant strategy for making passionate and committed servants of love was to first affirm God's love for their own being. Looking again at the teaching of Jesus, he spoke of the paradox of dying to self ('*psuche*', gk. = 'self-centredness') in order to save it ('*sozo*', gk. = 'preserve, make whole').<sup>6</sup> Despite people's misconception of this passage, Jesus' agenda for discipleship was not a *denial* of the human person, but rather a radical shift from a self-centered existence to one that redeemed our relationship to the 'other'. This is what Jesus had in mind when he said, 'Love God with your whole heart and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself'.<sup>7</sup> As we experience the love of God for our own selves, we can fully appreciate the same love God has for others. As John wrote in his epistle; "We love because he first loved us."<sup>8</sup> Tony Campolo and Mary Darling set out to make this connection more explicit in their book, *The God of Intimacy and Action*. They assert that the deeper one experiences joyful intimacy and communion with God, the greater one will be moved by what God desires; abundant life for *all*. They write:

We contend that being 'fully devoted followers of Jesus', a phrase popular with many evangelical churches today, involves commitment to what Jesus was committed to: maintaining a deep, mystical connection to God that empowered him to be compassionately connected to others, particularly the outcasts of society. Jesus wanted all to know God personally and enjoy the benefits of the 'full life' that God intends for all people.<sup>9</sup>

A person's personal experience of being unconditionally loved by God prior to acting as an agent of the gospel cannot be taken for granted. Any process of Christian formation must allow for this knowledge of God's love to be personally received. It is through the experience of God's grace in giving us abundance of life that our loyalty to acting as agents of this same compassion for others can be made.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark 8:35.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 22:39.

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4:19.

<sup>9</sup> Campolo, Tony and Mary Albert Darling. *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice*. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass. 2007. 15. Print.

### *Cultivating Conviction: Issues of Worldview*

Gregory Pierce, a long-time Christian community organizer and activist in the eastern states, discusses the challenge of mobilising many faith communities around political issues. In his book, *Activism That Makes Sense*, Gregory Pierce explains the issue in this way; “Until a congregation becomes convinced theologically through study and prayer that the God who acts in history does so through the actions of men and women, it will never act in defense of its values but will rather encourage its members to accept the world the way it is.”<sup>10</sup> This comment is key. In the previous chapter, we already explored, by way of the Stassen-Gushee model of ethics, the crucial role one’s ‘basic convictions’ (worldview) plays in determining how one engages the world around them. A curriculum that seeks to enable disciples to engage more fully in the redemptive process of all creation, needs to take into account the existing worldview of the participants. Do they *see* God being concerned with the redemption of the whole world? What of their anthropological views? *Is* society and creation redeemable? And are we truly capable of being transformative agents? These worldview questions must be addressed early on, and a compelling theological vision of God’s holistic kingdom offered, if we hope to see participants truly committed to becoming signs and servants of God’s reign in the world.

Further to that, researchers studying the characteristics of evangelical Christian political activists had to take into account the ‘ideological diversity’ with regard to their basic approach to politics. For example, they cited that, “the Reformed tradition within the American evangelicalism calls Christians to be engaged in the transformation of the world, while the Anabaptist tradition calls Christians to confront the world.”<sup>11</sup> This particular contrast was seen, for instance, in the comparison between the Stassen-Gushee and Hauerwas-Willimon theological models of ethics in the previous chapter. Mortimer Arias also reflects on how basic convictions

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<sup>10</sup> Pierce, Gregory. *Activism That Makes Sense*. Chicago: ACTA Publications. 1997. 8. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Stevenson, William ed. *Christian Political Activism at the Crossroads*. Lanham: University Press of America. 1994. 135. Print.

influence evangelistic objectives. Regarding 'eschatology', Arias writes; "I sincerely believe that part of our problem with the theology of evangelization, and with the elusive issue of motivation, has very much to do with a defective (and more defective because it has been implicit rather than deliberate) eschatology. What do we really expect in evangelization? The conversion of all humanity? The expansion of Christianity to all tribe, people, or culture group, or to every village and neighbourhood? The 'churchification' of the world?"<sup>12</sup> Arias goes on to quote the late general secretary of the World Council of Churches, W.A. Visser't Hooft, as saying: "Tell me what your eschatology is and I will tell you what your attitude is in relation to Church, state, and society."<sup>13</sup>

Even with regard to ethical decisions, Dennis Hollinger points to the same complexity of thought. "Christians", remarks Hollinger, "can appeal to the same ethical principles, or the same biblical texts, and still end up with different strategies for applying their moral and ethical commitments to societal issues."<sup>14</sup> He goes on to explain that ethical models will, among other things, "...depend on the Christ-culture perspectives espoused. Advocates of a Christ against culture approach will not use public policy or structural mechanisms for change. For example, in Sider's parable about the village, those of a Christ against culture stance are more likely to opt for ambulances, while those with a Christ the transformer approach are more likely to push for structural changes."<sup>15</sup>

These are but examples of the complex theological convictions that guide and direct our work in the world. A clear biblical vision of the reign of God will need to be developed in the minds of Christians if they are to ultimately act in accord with God's will and purpose. Here we may find Snyder's work on theological models of the Kingdom to be helpful.

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<sup>12</sup> Arias, Mortimor. *Announcing the Reign of God*. Lima: Academic Renewal Press. 1984. 87. Print.

<sup>13</sup> Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God*, 87.

<sup>14</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Ada: Baker Academic, 2002. 256-7. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 257.



### *Cultivating Compassion: Issues of Discernment*

In light of the stated importance of developing both a strong commitment to, and conviction of, God's redemptive reign among disciples, the following observation by Matthew Lamb in his book, *Solidarity with Victims*, is equally crucial; "Individuals may have the best will in the world, may be good and upright, and yet by their actions contribute to social and historical processes which oppress and dehumanize."<sup>16</sup> This speaks to the vital dimension of ethics Stassen and Gushee describe as the 'way of seeing', and the need to cultivate not just a deep loyalty toward the reign of God, but the right analytical skills to discern the work of God's justice in the complexity of the world. There are three concepts that I found helpful in understanding the call to deeper discernment, which I will briefly highlight.

#### *Compassion*

T.V. Philip, a popular Christian teacher from India, once observed that in the gospels, when Jesus is described as having compassion on others, it is in the act of 'seeing them'. He goes on to describe compassion as "...a movement of the heart from oneself to the other. Our heart takes upon itself the suffering of the other. It is now more ours than the other person's. We stand in the place of the other, carrying the other's burden."<sup>17</sup> Compassion enables us to take on the perspective of the one we are seeking to serve. We see, from the wisdom of the person's own suffering, the cause of the misery.

This ability to 'see through the heart' was central to Jesus' ethics. Stassen and Gushee illustrate the point in the following way; "The priest and the Levite *saw* and passed by on the other side, but the compassionate Samaritan *saw with compassion* and took the needed action. A key variable that shapes our perception is how we see *the threat* (the cause of what is wrong). If

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<sup>16</sup> Lamb, Matthew. *Solidarity with Victims*. Chestnut Ridge: Crossroad. 1982. 3. Print.

<sup>17</sup> Philips, TV, "Jesus Had Compassion on Them (Matthew 14:13-21)." *Religion-Online*. Eds. Ted & Winnie Brock. Religion Online, n.d. <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1551>. Web. 16 April 2010.

we want to see the threat to God's creation with compassion, we cannot pass by on the other side."<sup>18</sup> If we are to be effective agents of transformation, this ability to discern the reality of injustice is crucial. Without compassion, we will simply not see the threat, and consequently be unmotivated to engage the injustice, or at the least misguided in our efforts. But by practicing compassion, we learn to see the world from the perspective of the victim, and find a deeper commitment for God's justice to be done.

### *Critical Awareness*

At the same time, Geraldine Smyth cautions against moving too quickly into an uncritical practice of compassion without a critical framework for analysis, lest we adopt the bias of the victim or bring our own into their world. Smyth writes,

Critical awareness suggests that one stand centred in the identity of one's tradition, and exercise one's reflective and speculative capacities – now engaging in social analysis, now connecting to the shared memory or myths and wisdom of other traditions, times and places, not simply so that one's consciousness be expanded, but also that it be challenged by the new reality, and so light up the dark places of one's ignorance or prejudice. For we are controlled by that of which we are unconscious.<sup>19</sup>

Joe Holland and Peter Henriot apply this maxim to a practical methodology for social analysis in the church. Their approach involves four steps. They call the first crucial step, 'Conversion'. Along the lines of what Smyth calls for, Holland and Henriot explain that this first step in social analysis entails "...making explicit the values we bring to the task. That is, we need to be in touch with the perspectives, biases, stances which influence the questioning we do and the judgments we make. As we have emphasized repeatedly, no social analysis is 'value free'."<sup>20</sup> In this first step of analysis we clarify our starting point, especially ensuring that we are

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<sup>18</sup> Stassen, Glen and David Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press. 2003. 430. Print.

<sup>19</sup> Smyth, Geraldine S., *A Way of Transformation*. New York: P. Lang Publishers. 1995.199. Print.

<sup>20</sup> Holland, Joe and Peter Henriot. *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1983. 96. Print.

grounding our analysis in the 'privileged hermeneutic' of the poor who God continually chooses to shape the good news around.<sup>21</sup>

Holland and Henriot then describe the next three steps of social analysis in the following way. The second step is what they term 'Description', taking both an impressionistic and systemic approach to describing the reality of the situation. This step is to "help us enter into the picture, get in touch with the experience of the situation, and begin also to point out the more important elements."<sup>22</sup> The third step involves the actual analysis of the detailed description, by asking a set of questions around four important factors; history, structures, values, and direction (ie. future trends).<sup>23</sup>

The final step is appropriately called, 'Conclusions' wherein the all-important work of discerning the 'root elements' that need be addressed for real transformation to take place. This involves being able to identify the most significant factors influencing the situation. This often requires the development of criteria to determine the most appropriate decision-making process, as well as priorities of what issues will be addressed. Usually a lot of ground work needs to be covered before proper conclusions can be reached. If all this sounds quite complicated, and questions surface as to its necessity for ministry, Jesus relates this to a wise person who built his house on the rock, a shrewd manager who figured out effective solutions to his problem, a builder who first estimated the cost, and a king who took the time to count his soldiers before going to war.<sup>24</sup> This trench work is part of the sacrificial nature of the Christian vocation. But, if we are truly going to "energize and empower the community and its members in the hope for a better world toward which they may move",<sup>25</sup> this is the essential work of discipleship.

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<sup>21</sup> Holland, *Social Analysis*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Holland, *Social Analysis*, 97.

<sup>23</sup> Holland, *Social Analysis*, 98-100.

<sup>24</sup> Luke 6:48; Luke 16:8; Luke 14:28, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Schipani, Daniel. *Religious education encounters liberation theology*. Birmingham: Religious Education Press. 1988. 229. Print.

### *Dangerous Memories*

By itself, however, simply having a critical awareness of the reality will not go far enough in enabling Christians to practice social transformation in the present. What we need, argues Russell Butkus, are lived stories of struggle and freedom from the past in order to inspire us to move into concrete acts of redemption in our own context. Butkus borrows the concept of 'dangerous memory' coined by Johannes Metz, to emphasize the impact of historical faith for the contemporary struggle. Because of the cost of redemptive ministry, we need to *see* 'the hope for a better world', and our greatest resource for this is the fruit of those saints who laboured before us. Explains Butkus; "...dangerous memory refers to the intentional process of remembering the past traditions of suffering and the attempts to alleviate those sufferings for the expressed purpose of provoking a present praxis for freedom in the hope of future kingdom shalom."<sup>26</sup> Butkus further delineates the meaning of 'dangerous memory' in the following way:

- 1) Dangerous memory embodies the remembrance of suffering and injustice
- 2) Dangerous memory embodies the remembrance of those stories, symbols, and personal-collective voices which stood to alleviate suffering and injustice in the name of compassion and human freedom
- 3) Dangerous memory has a narrative structure meaning and is therefore communicated in a practical manner, that is by way of stories.<sup>27</sup>

Butkus then continues to offer three compelling arguments for the relevance of this concept for the contemporary North American church:

- 1) Dangerous memory refers to the disturbing socio-economic conditions of the 'Old World' and the experience of displacement that brought many immigrants to these shores
- 2) Dangerous memory refers to the actual experience of injustice in the U.S.: the struggle, hardship, poverty, exploitation, marginalization, and bondage that many Christians encountered
- 3) Dangerous memory refers to the church's response to injustice: the search for freedom and social justice...a tradition of U.S. Catholic and Protestant voices, activists, and movements that supported and worked for social transformation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Butkus, Russell, "Dangerous Memories", *Religious Education as Social Transformation*. Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1989. 224-225. Print.

<sup>27</sup> Butkus, *Religious Education*, 223.

<sup>28</sup> Butkus, *Religious Education*, 224.

For Butkus, the notion of dangerous memory is embodied most clearly in the tradition of Quaker spirituality and the experiences of the Black Protestant church. How does one foster such a memory, though, in the minds of Christians who may have not lived these stories personally?

Here Butkus is helpful in offering a few pedagogical strategies:

- 1) Focusing questions or activities to help the participants uncover personal, collective, or generational memories of suffering and freedom and/or experiences or interests in forgetting suffering.
- 2) A personal timeline, often done in artistic fashion, whereby the student traces or highlights what he/she considers experiences of suffering, injustice, or freedom. This is followed by probing questions, enabling participants to come to a critical awareness of the social conditioning, interests, and assumptions that are embedded in their present action or inaction for justice
- 3) Opportunity for the participants to encounter the church's Story and Vision; Story constituted by the remembrance of suffering and freedom, and Vision being an 'anticipatory memory' of the kingdom as a future for the suffering, the hopeless, the oppressed, the injured, and the useless of the earth
- 4) Present the church's biblical-theological Story and Vision; theological perspectives on the meaning of justice and social ethics, Bible studies, etc.
- 5) The church's search for freedom and justice be retold in the hope of providing role models and paradigms for social transformation and action; old and original writings from those who suffered and searched for justice can be discussed
- 6) Field experience; first hand opportunity to experience situations of suffering and injustice and what is currently being done to alleviate them.<sup>29</sup>

### *Cultivating Character: Issues of 'Spiritual Discipline and Vocation'*

#### *The Virtues*

The importance of virtues for Christians is that they identify the right characteristics to cultivate through our daily actions. Virtues are the key indicators of our spiritual growth.

Hollinger explains that the focus on character, or virtue, is "akin to the biblical language of the heart with a strong emphasis on actions springing naturally from the inner core of a person."<sup>30</sup> At its heart, Christian faith is defined primarily not by what we believe, but how we live, and ultimately *who we are*. As Hollinger quotes Iris Murdoch as saying; "At crucial moments of

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<sup>29</sup> Butkus, *Religious Education*, 226, 227, 228.

<sup>30</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 46.

choice, most of the business of choosing is already over.”<sup>31</sup> Focusing on virtues remind us, as Campolo points out, that we cannot live according to the will of God “without making any radical change” on the inside.<sup>32</sup> Virtues are the sum total of our spiritual disciplines, the ‘fruit of our inner labour’. They speak of how we ultimately see ourselves functioning in society, and what moral legacy we will truly leave behind. As Stassen and Gushee explain it; “Virtues are defined as qualities of a person that make that person a good person in community, and that contribute to the good of the community, or to the good that humans are designed for.”<sup>33</sup>

The question of course this raises is, ‘Which moral vision is defining ‘good’ for society?’ The authors call on Christians to clarify their virtues in light of Jesus’ vision of the universal and transcendent Kingdom. As they explain it; “All of us are also participants in one or more other societies: our hometown, our educational community, our church, our nation and the rapidly growing global community. We need to learn some virtues for making our contributions to those communities also (Jeremiah 29.7). Those virtues differ. But our central virtues, by which the others are judged, are the virtues of the reign of God.”<sup>34</sup> And what are these central ‘kingdom virtues’? Below is a variety of lists suggesting what these might be:

Jon Sobrino: A Fruitful Spirituality

- Spirit of fortitude
- Spirit of empowerment
- Spirit of creativity
- Spirit of solidarity
- Spirit of joy<sup>35</sup>

John Howard Yoder: on the Church’s Witness to the State

- representative of the church’s clear conviction
- consistent with her own behaviour
- only speaks when she has something to say<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 46.

<sup>32</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 76.

<sup>33</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 53.

<sup>35</sup> Sobrino, Jon. *Spirituality of Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1988, 96ff. Print.

Stassen and Gushee: Virtues and the Drama of God's Reign

- Humble
- *identify* the 'other' in need as the focus of God's concern
- Mournful
- Mourn with sincere repentance toward God, and comfort others who mourn
- Obedient
- Are surrendered to God, committing ourselves to following God's way, and making peace
- Passionate
- Hunger and thirst for delivering, community-restoring justice
- Compassionate
- Practice compassion in action, covenant faithfulness toward those in need
- Integrity of character
- Seek God's will with holistic integrity, in all that we are and do
- Peaceful
- Make peace with our enemies, as God shows love to God's enemies
- Courageous
- Are willing to suffer because of our loyalties to Jesus and to justice<sup>37</sup>

Scott Bessenecker: Critical Vows in God's Economy

- Incarnational – pursuing Jesus' descent into humanity
- Devotional – pursuing intimacy with Jesus
- Communal – pursuing relational wealth
- Missional – pursuing the Kingdom
- Marginal – pursuing at the edges<sup>38</sup>

Hauerwas and Willimon: Virtues of Resident Aliens

- Honest
- Constant
- Obedient
- Nonviolent
- Courageous

In their diversity, one begins to recognize some common themes that can confidently be used to characterise effective witnesses of the Kingdom. The following is what I propose as concise characteristics, or virtues, of a disciple formed by a biblical holistic redemptive vision:

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<sup>36</sup> Yoder, John Howard. *The Christian Witness to the State*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Scottdale: Herald Press. 2002, 21-22. Print.

<sup>37</sup> Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Bessenecker, Scott. *The New Friars: the emerging movement serving the world's poor*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press. 20-23. Print.

- Passionately expresses a vision of God's reality
- Consistently compassionate behaviour toward others
- Enables others to experience grace and transformation (ie. empowerment)
- Courageous before challenges
- Humble and obedient in service to others

### *Spiritual Disciplines*

Having identified kingdom virtues, how then are they cultivated? One of the distinct gifts of the new monastic movement has been their recovery of the spiritual disciplines. Jonathan Wilson, a pioneer in the new monastic movement, contends that it is precisely the purpose of Christian ministry in the world that calls us to adopt the *disciplined* life of the ancient monastics. Wilson writes, "...we are constantly tempted to form a church that will simply undergird the civil order. A new monasticism refuses that temptation."<sup>39</sup> He says elsewhere that the spiritual disciplines are necessary, "because the recovery of the gospel *telos* will not come easily or quickly."<sup>40</sup> This, as has been discussed throughout this thesis-project, is a crucial statement. The *telos*, or purpose of the gospel, speaks to the true outcome, or 'fruit', of spiritual life, which is the virtuous witness of God's reign in the world. This does not happen overnight, and requires what Eugene Peterson once described as a 'long obedience in the same direction.'<sup>41</sup>

Spiritual disciplines are what Campolo and Darling call 'holy habits', that when practiced with a mind on 'the outcome of faith', over time fosters stronger loyalty, deeper conviction, greater compassion, and eventual embodiment of God's reign in Christ. Schipani describes the disciplined life in Christ succinctly:

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<sup>39</sup> Wilson, Jonathan. *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International. 1998. 78. Print.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> Peterson, Eugene. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press. 2000. Print.



Discipleship consists in allowing the pattern or logic of Jesus' life and teaching to reveal or disclose a relationship with God through taking on or participating in that mode of redemptive – ie. liberated and liberating – life. In other words, the first and primary way of knowing and loving God through Jesus Christ is by entering into the disclosive pattern of his life, a life characterized by love for the sake of the coming reign of God.”<sup>42</sup>

Spiritual disciplines then, are essential to *discipleship* - and discipleship, as Schipani points out, is not for its own sake but for the Kingdom. Willard emphasizes this point when he says:

Spiritual formation and discipleship are all about development of the life in the kingdom of God that comes to us through the risen Christ. As a disciple of Jesus, I am living with Him, learning to live in the kingdom of God as He lived in the kingdom of God. Spiritual formation is taking the explicit statement of Jesus and learning how to live this way.”<sup>43</sup>

Campolo and Darling make the similar point. Spiritual disciplines, they claim, help us “...focus on the things of God if we remember that their purpose is to open up space in our lives to love God and others, and not to give us a set of rules to make us feel virtuous. Making rule the end instead of the means stops us from having the power of God in our lives.”<sup>44</sup> Conversely, after setting our minds on Christ, spiritual disciplines can help us “...connect intimately with Christ in ways that foster Christ-likeness and therefore help us to reach out in compassionate love and justice toward the lost and needy.”<sup>45</sup>

### *Holy Habits*

What then, are some ‘holy habits’ that we should practice? Campolo and Darling go on to suggest that ‘anything’ can be a spiritual practice if it is done:

- intentionally
- over time with regularity
- with the goal of being formed into Christ-likeness

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<sup>42</sup> Schipani, *Religious Education encounters Liberation Theology*, 132.

<sup>43</sup> Willard, Dallas. “The Gospel of the Kingdom and Spiritual Formation”, *The Kingdom Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010. 53-54. Print.

<sup>44</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 83-84.

<sup>45</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 81.

- with the result (fruit) of growing in love for God and others<sup>46</sup>

The authors encourage us to engage in a variety of disciplines, referring to Foster's categorization of the inward, outward, and corporate disciplines. This balanced approach to the disciplines challenges our spiritual 'blindspots', and ensures we are developing deeper awareness at various levels of our existence. As Campolo and Darling remark; "We may, for example, attend church whenever the doors are open; however, we may not see the relevance of working for justice in the neighbourhoods beyond our church doors."<sup>47</sup> That being said, they do argue the need today for Christians to commit to three particular practices: the prayer of examen, *lectio divina* (holy reading), and centering (silent) prayer. They argue that "...these three, in particular, are lost practices to many of us, resulting in too many lopsided Christians and Christian communities. As Jeremiah 6.16 says, 'Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'"<sup>48</sup>

An important note here. Whatever we define as 'holy habits' can quickly be reduced in meaning if not firmly grounded in the context of the seeking the Kingdom. The most profound disciplines are what Stassen and Gushee describe as the *transforming initiatives* Jesus taught throughout his Sermon on the Mount. These initiatives, they argue, are the standard 'holy habits' of all disciples, calling forth grace, sacrifice, and perseverance in emulating the redemptive work of Christ in the world. Our 'holy habits' must be measured in the light of Jesus' own practices, lest they are pulled back by the human tendency toward comfort, particularly in our spiritual life. In light of such dangers, the next section addresses the importance of individuals practicing faith in the context of community.

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<sup>46</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 77.

<sup>47</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 81.

<sup>48</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 81.

*The centrality of the Church in Christian Ethics*

In light of Hauerwas and Willimon's contributions to this study, it is important to make a brief comment on the role of the Church in equipping disciples for social transformation. In the previous chapter we explored the notion of church as a distinct *polis*, having its own socio-political system whose ethic is love and politics is the lordship of Christ. This, argued Hauerwas and Willimon, cannot be understood or practiced outside of the 'confessing' body of believers actively following the 'way of the cross'. Hollinger sums it up well in the context of developing kingdom virtues:

And how do we build virtue and moral character? Not by analyzing the results of our actions or by exploring moral duties, principles, and laws. Rather, we develop moral virtue in a concrete community through the stories or narratives the community tells. Morality is thus not about autonomous individuals attempting to discern the right thing to do. It is essentially a particular way of seeing the world, informed by narratives that have long sustained and inspired a community's citizens. And so formed and shaped in inward disposition, one will then live life in accordance with virtues that flow almost naturally from the moral actor. The foundation of ethics in this approach resides within the community and its narratives; the essence of ethics is character and the virtues that form it.<sup>49</sup>

What this does for character formation, is place special importance on the spiritual discipline of listening to the biblical story in the context of a *community living the paschal mystery*. Richard Foster characterises the daily life of such a community as one which practices the corporate disciplines of; confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.<sup>50</sup> Significantly, by celebration Foster means the profound awareness of joy in the presence of Christ, who came announcing the year of Jubilee.<sup>51</sup> Such good news, writes Foster, means:

...we are called into a perpetual Jubilee of the Spirit. Such a radical, divinely enabled freedom from possessions and a restructuring of social arrangements cannot help but bring celebration. When the poor receive the good news, when the captives are released, when the blind receive their sight, when the oppressed are liberated, who can withhold the shout of jubilee?<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 45-46.

<sup>50</sup> Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline*. New York: HarperCollins. 2009. 141-201. Print.

<sup>51</sup> Luke 4:19.

<sup>52</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 190.

This 'perpetual jubilee', explains Foster, is not automatic. It is precisely a discipline of returning again to the deep truth of Christ's victory over death, even when we still struggle through the reality of its terror in the world. Foster warns against trying to "pump up people in joy when in reality nothing has happened in their lives. God has not broken into the routine experiences of their daily existence. Celebration comes when the common ventures of life are redeemed."<sup>53</sup> The reason why celebration is a corporate discipline, I believe, is because at any given time there are individuals in the community who need to be carried along in the joyous strains of others who are in that moment experiencing and/or witnessing the transformative work of Christ in the world. To witness the 'perpetual jubilee', we dare not set out into the world on our own, for the burden of witnessing joy in the harshness of the wilderness will be too great. It is crucial we are obedient to the call to shape our character for kingdom living in the company of the confessing Church.

So important, in fact, is community in developing virtues for kingdom ministry, Peter Bisson, director of the Forum for Social Faith and Justice in Toronto, recently reported that the spiritual practice of communal discernment will now become central to their work. They found that the result of 'spiritual conversation' around 'signs of the times' in small groups was;

...surprising bonding within a group; a deeper, far more frank and free conversation than is typical in discussion or in contemporary political discourse; new energy at the end of the process; new perspectives on social issues that go beyond what analysis by itself provides; a faith that is shared and social, and a social commitment that is manifestly spiritual. In effect, this method means asking not only 'what is the problem and what should we do about it?' but also 'what is God in Christ's Spirit doing in the world; how are we being invited to participate in what God is doing; and how do we know?' We hope that this practice will also promote a truly social faith, and help bring the resources of religious faith to contribute to the common good in a public way.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 193.

<sup>54</sup> Bisson, Peter. "Spiritual Conversation and Social Justice." *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, v. XLI. I (2010) no.123. 71. Print.

Campolo and Darling insist that the mission of witnessing a holistic kingdom gospel can only be accomplished by “being incorporated into vital churches wherein people with differing gifts and callings can complement one another, encourage and build up one another, and support one another’s respective ministries, all in the context of helping God’s kingdom to come, God’s will to be done, on *earth* as it is in heaven.”<sup>55</sup> May each of us know the grace and deep joy of finding such a spiritual home.

### ***Models of Christian Influence***

The above pages presented an outline of the four dimensions of a holistic ‘kingdom’ ethic. This four-fold ethical framework – commitment, conviction, compassion, and character – is a tool to develop a holistic redemptive vision for kingdom ministry in whatever context we are called to witness the reign of God. There are other factors than ethics, of course, in determining the shape of the Church’s mission.<sup>56</sup> While further exploration of those factors goes beyond the scope of this thesis-project, it may be helpful to at least share a list of models that have been used in applying kingdom ethics in various social contexts. Hollinger identifies nine models for people to consider, based on the kind of issues being addressed.

#### Christian Relief:

Focuses on bringing social and physical relief when the need arises

Strengths – highly personal, attention to immediate needs

Weaknesses – love devoid of justice, do not solve deeper institutional dimension

#### Christian Alternative Institutions:

Development of institutions created to address a particular need or issue not being met by the wider society. Example; hospitals, schools

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<sup>55</sup> Campolo, *God of Intimacy and Action*, 20.

<sup>56</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 269-271.

### Evangelism:

The most compelling means of changing the hearts of human beings and subsequently their involvements within the institutions of society. Three dimensions of relationship:

Social action as a consequence of evangelism

Social action as a bridge to evangelism

Social action as a partner with evangelism

### Prophetic Pronouncements:

Tradition of Old Testament prophets who challenged kings, religious leaders, and society as whole with reference to their moral failures and evil

### Lobbying:

Educating their constituencies regarding issues and influencing legislators and public policy

Inside lobbying; involves contact with public officials to influence voting or basic commitments on given issues

Outside lobbying; attempts by interest group leaders to mobilize citizens outside the policymaking community to contact or pressure public officials inside the policymaking community

### Political Parties/Political Groups:

Organized political parties who believe that the state rightly ordered can be a force for freedom, justice, peace, and even personal righteousness

Example; the British Movement for Christian Democracy - Westminster Declaration, before partisan they uphold principles of; social justice, reconciliation, active compassion, wise stewardship, empowerment, respect for life

### Nonviolent Resistance:

The use of pressure tactics to change society by peaceful means. Examples; marches, sit-downs strikes, boycotts, road blocking, refusal to pay taxes, civil disobedience

Important principle of non-violent resistance: although it is brought to bear when the fallen nature of society denies normal channels of political decision-making to those who work for justice, it is carried out under the self-discipline of respect for the order of society

### Christian Embodiment:

The church as a counter community within society through its character, actions, and vision

Seeks to embody racial reconciliation, economic justice, business integrity, respect for human life, and authentic personal and corporate character

Principle; the responsibility of the church is not to manage society or be effective therein but faithfully to embody the way of Christ

### Individual Impact:

The role of individual Christians in their jobs, communities, and civic responsibilities

Principle; Vocation is not a profession, but the primary place to which God calls us and works through us in the world<sup>57</sup>

These models present diverse and, in some instances, contrasting views on how Christians are called to live the Kingdom in the midst of the world they live in.<sup>58</sup> Some may take

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<sup>57</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 257-269.

<sup>58</sup> For a very thought-provoking study of the means of Christian influence in culture, see James Davison Turner, *To change the world: the irony, tragedy, and possibility of Christianity in the late modern world*. New York: Oxford University Press US. 2010. Print. Unfortunately, this thesis-project was near

issue that these models do not represent any real distinctive 'Christian' approach to our calling (save, perhaps, for the reference to evangelism as a direct means of conversion). It is my contention that we must not be overly concerned with the appearance of our work being 'Christian'. Confronting the church of his time which had become complicit in the horrors of Nazism, Bonhoeffer wrote; "For the sake of real people, the church must be thoroughly worldly".<sup>59</sup> Bonhoeffer here speaks in terms of the incarnation of Christ in the world. This is a vital principle of holistic ministry; our vocation, whatever its nature, calls us to be buried in the cultural life of the people we are seeking to transform. Claims Bonhoeffer; "There is no sphere from which it [the church] distances itself out of anxiety over going astray."<sup>60</sup> Wherever Christ calls us, and however the Spirit enables us to strive for the redemption of God's creation, we will find God's protection and grace over our labour. If our active participation truly is the 'educational outcome' of discipleship,<sup>61</sup> then even our 'failed' efforts will also be used redemptively by God in the eventual glorification of Christ. It is in the times when injustice is made right, hatred sown into love, sin healed by holiness, wars silenced in peace, that for our part in it the world will ask us for what reason we toiled, and then we shall 'give a reason for the hope' that is within us.<sup>62</sup> I believe Dulles captures well the Christian vocation to kingdom living in these following words:

...the Christian has a special vision of the inherent dignity of every human person, a distinctive ideal of unity and peace among all men [sic], a unique concern for freedom, a singular confidence in the value of suffering and sacrifice, and an unequalled hope that in the end God will establish his Kingdom in its fullness. The courage, hope, and readiness to risk and sacrifice that should follow from a living Christian faith are much needed by

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completion when this work was published. Otherwise, Hunter's essays would have received more detailed attention in this study.

<sup>59</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *A Testament to Freedom*. Eds. Geoffrey B. Kelley and Burton Nelson. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. 87. Print.

<sup>60</sup> Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom*, 87.

<sup>61</sup> Schipani, *Religious Education*, 157.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Peter 3:15.



the world in our day. It seems not impossible that Christians may find through cooperation that they are able to impregnate the world with these values.<sup>63</sup>

May it be so to the glory of God!

## **The Framework of the Curriculum**

### ***Course Objectives***

At the beginning of the first session, these were the four goals for the course I set out for each participant to reach:

- will understand the redemptive reality of God's Kingdom more clearly
- will have a clear framework for holistic discipleship
- will understand and appreciate the *dimensions of character growth* to cultivate through the disciplined practice of following Christ in the Kingdom
- will feel ready to practice kingdom living more intentionally

### ***Title***

"Made to Make a Difference: A series exploring grace, redemption, and Jesus' true vision for the kingdom of God"

The title of the course was intended to capture two things. First, people needed to know up front that the focus of the curriculum was about *making a difference* in the world. The less obvious point was the premise behind the discipleship framework they would learn, namely that God has *made* us to make a difference. Much of discipleship, therefore, is about becoming more deeply aware of *how* God prepares us for transformational ministry, and the particular *form* each of us take on through that developmental process. And so, the participants are invited to explore

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<sup>63</sup> Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. Mississauga: Random House. 1987. 157. Print. (italics mine)

as a group the central issues of grace, redemption, and Jesus' true vision of the kingdom of God for discipleship.

### ***Basic Outline of the Course***

I felt it was important, at the beginning of the first session, to persuade participants of the significance of this topic. I set the problem of people not having a clear understanding of the holistic nature of Christian discipleship in its historical context, wanting to show both the complexity of developing a truly biblical worldview, and how much our own presuppositions are not really biblical, but shaped by the cultural and theological paradigm of 'modernity'. With that background, I then present views of four contemporary church leaders who address the issue of a lack of holistic discipleship in a relevant fashion. Dallas Willard eloquently articulates the problem, Bill Hybels admits to the problem, Rick Warren calls the church to repent of the problem, while Charles Colson provides way beyond the problem. The session closes with a review of all that has been discussed.

In the second session I felt it would be important to provide a philosophical framework for 'holistic discipleship' prior to introducing the practice of it. One of the concerns I had was that not just new practices, but a new *paradigm* for discipleship - which is to say a new way of *thinking about* discipleship - would be instilled among the participants. I planned therefore to spend the beginning of the second session walking participants through both the principles and distinct elements of a holistic developmental process.<sup>64</sup> This involves offering a definition of discipleship, explaining the key features of a holistic developmental process, outlining three vital areas for maturational growth, then introducing the four dimensions of character growth we primarily focus on during the remainder of the curriculum. During the rest of this session I plan to

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<sup>64</sup> This is adapted from the developmental process presented by Professor Harv Powers, where he identifies the elements of the redemptive process as; occurring over time, sequential, hierarchical, interrelated, experiential, cyclic in nature. "Redemptive Leadership Model." Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Charlotte, NC. May 2007. Lecture.

begin exploring the first dimension, 'commitment', as the crucial basis for sustained growth in Christ. Here I argue that the extent to which we experience Jesus' redemptive grace in our personal lives is the distance we will follow him into the world as his kingdom servants.

In the third session, I plan to briefly review the principles behind the developmental process, then move quickly into exploring the second dimension of character growth, 'Conviction'. After repeating the importance of nurturing a real trust in Christ's grace and love for us, I explore how we develop deeper 'conviction' with respect to a holistic perspective of the Kingdom in this world. Here I use Howard Snyder's diagram of the 'tension points' in the Kingdom as the primary tool for reflection. The latter part of the session is an exploration of how we develop true 'compassion' for others, the third dimension of character growth. I define compassion as something more than 'sympathy' for others, but a critical analysis of the root causes of a person's suffering, and the rooting of our lives in the 'dangerous memory' of Jesus' enduring passion for the least, the last, and the lost in the eyes of society.

The fourth session is devoted to exploring how one cultivates 'character', here referring to the consistent *bearing of the fruit of Christ's redemption* in our own lives, the fourth dimension of growth in the Kingdom. After briefly summarising again the philosophical framework for holistic discipleship, I work through the various means by which we consistently engage in real acts of redemption in the world as followers of Jesus. I emphasize the importance of learning and living into our God-giving *shape* for kingdom living; otherwise known as our *vocation*. We then look at the nature of spiritual disciplines as 'holy habits' that bring us back each day to a growing awareness of God's gracious presence in our lives. I also reflect on Jesus' call to 'pick up our cross' and follow him as the key to living redemptively in the world. Looking again at the core of Jesus' teaching on discipleship in the Sermon, this call to carry the cross captures all the elements of his holistic redemptive vision in one poignant symbol, this time seen as the place where Frederick Beuchner says 'our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet'. Time at the end

of the session is left for participants to complete a post-assessment survey. For detailed lesson plans and powerpoint slides, see 'Appendix B'.

## EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a thorough evaluation of the curriculum as the project for this thesis-project, and offer some recommendations regarding future related study. The questions essentially being asked in this chapter are; what went well? What elements were effective in the goal of fostering a holistic redemptive vision among Christians today? What parts proved to be not effective for the task? Overall, what learning do I take away for future ministry leadership, particularly in the area of discipleship? For reasons that I will explain, this chapter is largely centered around lessons learned while teaching the curriculum with Test Group 1. I will begin by offering anecdotal evidence from this group showing the effectiveness of the curriculum. I will then focus on the weaknesses of the curriculum that emerged, particularly with regards to the evaluation method; the pre and post-assessment surveys. In light of the inadequate data gained from that evaluation, I will summarize further research I did on developing an effective evaluation for a curriculum with an outline of the summative assessment tool I subsequently used for this project. Finally, I will report on the results of this summative evaluation between the three test groups, having solicited a small group from Test Group 1 to repeat their evaluation through this new method. This chapter will close with my own conclusions regarding the merits of this curriculum, based on all the evaluative material collected throughout the process.

### **Lessons learned from Test Group 1**

The purpose of this thesis-project was to more clearly bring to light the true meaning of redemption in Scripture and the centrality of the Kingdom of God in the gospels, as witnessed most clearly in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and how these two theological themes require a framework for discipleship that fosters what I have been describing as a *holistic redemptive vision* for the church's mission. As the practical component of my research, the curriculum

project was intended to provide a logical and biblically sound model for holistic discipleship that would be effective in moving people primarily through the four dimensions of character growth. During the course with Test Group 1, I listened and watched for any indication of such movement. Were people expressing deeper commitment to Christ as a result of what they heard? Did the teaching instill in their minds a stronger conviction of the biblical holistic Gospel? Were people moved to see the world with greater compassion? Were participants motivated to engage more deeply in God's redemptive work in the world?

Test Group 1 was drawn from a fairly large pool of course participants. The average attendance for the four sessions was just over 50. Among this total group that participated, the anecdotal evidence suggests some positive outcomes of the course. I call these 'signs of success', in as much as real stories of transformation are the true measure of all ministry. However, that being said, it must be noted that personal anecdotes were *not* intended to be the primary means of evaluating this curriculum. My intention was to use pre and post assessment surveys. This element of the project, however, turned out to be where some key mistakes were made – and some vital lessons learned. I will address those under another heading. Here, however, I present the positive outcomes.

## **Signs of Success**

### ***Deeper Commitment***

Both the direction and nature of our actions in the world are directly influenced by who, or what, we feel most loyal to. The key indicator of commitment to kingdom living are people expressing their allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Following that are people's willingness to overcome their fear of, or indifference toward, the deep brokenness of the world for the sake of witnessing the gift of salvation in Christ to others. It is the result of encountering this radical grace of Christ in the face of the world's brokenness and sin that we are inspired to follow him as our Lord. Against all the temptation and deceit Satan lays before those who would

claim allegiance to the Prince of peace, it is the taste of freedom Christ offers that enables us to sustain our journey of discipleship with Him.

After I spoke directly to this issue during the course, six participants came around me, sharing how this the grounding of our being in the radical encounter of Christ marked the crucial first step in seeking the Kingdom for others, had in fact inspired them to want to know Christ more intimately. As one woman said, “I was feeling the burden of trying to serve others, because I was not allowing Christ to first serve me.” As a result of attending this session, she realized that this was her ‘limiting factor’ in her own discipleship. I prayed for each of them that they would embrace Christ, the author of their own salvation, and allow the joy of that knowledge to be the place of their service to others in Christ’s name.

### ***Stronger convictions***

The other indicator of participants moving toward kingdom living is when they not only understand, but become excited by, the biblical vision of God’s redemption of *all* creation, and express certainty that full participation in this will of God is the purpose for their own life. In this regard, the clearest evidence of the effectiveness of the course was the number of requests by participants for copies of the teaching notes and *powerpoint* slides. Thirteen people submitted emails to receive teaching material between sessions. In the post-assessment survey, most comments regarding what they appreciated about the course had to do with the ‘insightful’ and ‘thought-provoking’ teaching. After sitting in the first session, the senior pastor of the congregation hosting the course asked if I’d be interested in writing a book on the subject with him, as he also had been wrestling with the issues and appreciated the way I was addressing them. Below are some of the written comments indicating participants deepening their convictions about the call to live the holistic redemptive vision of God in Scripture:

Survey Question - What I appreciated about the course:

“‘Professing Christians don’t differ in character, just ritual, from their neighbors’ – a wake up call.”

“It was very informative. It opened my eyes to the real mission for a Christian.”

“It has pulled it all together for me.”

“Insight into the requirement of being a disciple.”

“Insightful, challenging, thought-provoking.”

“Relevant topic.”

“The opportunity to have a better understanding of what it means to be a disciple in this world in all aspect of our lives. Excellent course.”

“Brought together ideas I have had floating around and gave them some more clarity.”

### ***Greater Compassion***

The third indicator of people shifting toward kingdom living is showing greater compassion to others, especially the least, the last, and the lost among us. This is a difficult element to measure outside the context of any real interaction with people. However, the conversation between breaks and after sessions were a good indication that participants were being led to look more deeply into the lives of those around them. For instance, one business man quietly came over and expressed his shock at his realization that, prior to the course, he had not thought of his employees as ones Christ was calling him to be compassionate towards. That evening he committed to learning more about the personal needs of his employees, and how his company could be of greater support to their families. Another eight of the participants have traveled to visit the inner city ministry I now lead, where we recently began partnerships with a refugee shelter, the local public school, and the Salvation Army to disciple the most marginalized in downtown west Toronto.



### ***Redemptive Character***

Redemptive character is moving beyond living compassionately for others, and bearing the fruit of a sustained, growing, and redemptive disciple of Christ; of consistently choosing the ‘redemptive way’ Jesus exemplified in the gospels. Given the limited time of the course, I did not expect to see evidence of this as a result of our discussions together. However, I am pleased that weeks after the course, two of the participants who came to visit our inner city ministries have continued their involvement. One felt called to serving meals at our street outreach dinner, while the other is providing much needed leadership to the refugee support ministry. These ministries presented new challenges for both of them, and their willingness to take a risk and commit to the ministry has been encouraging to our inner-city team. Another participant, on the post-assessment survey, wrote that she would like to foster a small group in her local church “centered on pursuing this further”. Some comments in the post-assessment surveys indicated a deeper appreciation for the redemptive nature of Christian character than what those same persons wrote in their pre-assessment surveys. Two persons, for instance, when asked at the beginning to indicate ways of identifying a disciple of Christ, wrote that “only God can identify who belongs to him.” One of these same persons, when asked after the course to state what he now thought the purpose of discipleship was, wrote; “To redeem the fallen part of me with a view to bring forth fruit of the Spirit.”

### **Areas to Improve**

#### ***The Lesson Plans***

As mentioned above, as much as these anecdotes are useful to report, they were not intended to be the primary method of evaluating this curriculum. The pre and post-assessment surveys were intended to provide the substantial evidence for the course evaluation. However, for two reasons that did not unfold as planned. First, there was the design of the evaluation tool itself,

which I will explain further. The other reason had to do with the lack of time given in the last session for participants to fill out the post-assessment survey before leaving.

The result of not leaving adequate time for participants to complete the survey at the end of the last session was two-fold. First, those who attempted to complete it prior to leaving rushed their responses, while even leaving some of the questions unanswered. Second, few of the participants who left with the survey ever returned it, leaving a very small sample of completed pre and post-assessment surveys to work from. In the end, what I realized was this was a result trying to include too much course material in the sessions.

A factor that caused this problem was the desire of the parish coordinating committee to limit the course to four weeks. Based on the fast approaching summer season, as well as significant changes about to occur because of the transition to a new senior pastor, I understood their hesitancy to have a program that took too much time away from focusing on other things. At the same time, I expressed my concern around trying to compress what I felt was a six-week course into such a time frame. In the end, I accommodated their interests and attempted to prepare in such a way that I could cover all the material I felt important to offer. Going into the last session, I planned to leave 20 minutes at the end for participants to complete the post-assessment survey. However, when that time came I still had another section yet to cover, and for the sake of coherence opted to complete my teaching notes rather than stop prematurely. Interestingly enough, when asked in the final survey how the course can be improved for the future, the only consistent criticism had to do with too much content being included in the course, and more time for discussion and questions would benefit the participants. As one person responded to the question; "Less content, more discussion and feedback – or 4 weeks is not enough!" Another person suggested, "A less ambitious scope."

It was on the way home from the church that I realized the consequence of my decision, in that the quality of the evaluation process was critical to the final stage of the thesis-project. At that point I was not sure how to progress, except to weigh the evidence and determine whether it

was adequate to draw any firm conclusions regarding the benefit of this project for future ministry. In the end, I was not satisfied with the feedback that was compiled, and proceeded to develop a more effective evaluation tool. I will explain the new format, but first briefly a closer look at what went wrong in the first method itself.

### ***The Assessment Surveys***

Within the time that I had, I tried to target reasonable learning outcomes. Being familiar with the congregation, and anticipating who many of the participants would be, I figured that most of them would most likely get as far as understanding the key concepts of what I was presenting to them. I therefore decided to design the surveys as an assessment of their understanding of the concepts prior to the course, and how their understanding of these same concepts and/or terms changed as a result of attending the course. I thought, for their own benefit, it may be a way of reinforcing some basic knowledge they learned from the course, much like a mid-term quiz. By learning these concepts my expectation would be that they would use them to build, or reframe, their understanding of discipleship for the future.

Unfortunately, as alluded to above, it became evident that the pre and post-assessment surveys were not adequately thought through. Several factors led to this method of evaluation being ineffective. First, the pre-assessment survey only addressed a person's level of knowledge – but was this *really* the primary objective of the course? Even in light of the limited time frame, initial survey questions should have also addressed the other elements of holistic discipleship. Greater knowledge might be one measurement of developing deeper conviction of the holistic vision of the kingdom, but what were participants' perception of their level of commitment, compassion, and character with regards to kingdom living?

With regard to the post-assessment survey, as I mentioned, no time was left at the end of the last session for people to fill it out. The organizers made an effort to collect people's survey in the following days. Of the fifty or so participants, twenty surveys were returned. In reviewing

those, another issue emerged. It was hoped that the participants would learn the definitions of the terms by virtue of participating in the course. However, based on the final surveys, it was evident that few people took accurate notes.

I would suggest two reasons for this. First, no clear instruction was given to participants to take notes. That was an oversight, as most people taking part in a community-based training program take note of details on a 'need to know' basis. Memorizing specific sequences of words and phrases is not a normal habit for adults unless they immediately see a need to do so. Second, based on the responses of many participants, their attention was focused on how what they were hearing was impacting the *affective* domain of their learning, in contrast to the cognitive domain. This, in actual terms, points to a positive outcome of the course, since the goal of teaching the course really was to move people in heart as well as mind.

Taking all this into consideration, I believe the poor results of the post assessment had less to do with the effectiveness of the course, and more to do with the evaluation tool not being properly designed and implemented. After this experiment, I now appreciate the warning one group of educators gave to those who would attempt to use this evaluation method:

Caution must be used in interpreting the pre and post-test results in terms of implications for the curriculum. The pre/post-test must also be piloted to determine whether it is valid. For example, significant increases in scores between the pre-test and the post-test can serve as an indication that the workshop achieved its objectives and the curriculum was effective; lack of substantial increase in scores, however, requires further analysis and interpretation. A lack of change or decrease could reflect a poorly designed test rather than indicate a problem with the curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

### **Taking a New Approach: Summative Evaluation**

As a result of the insufficient information being gained from the pre and post assessments, some participants were invited back for a subsequent session. Here participants

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<sup>1</sup> International Training & Education Center for Health. "Piloting a Curriculum: Evaluating the Effectiveness of a New Training," *I-Tech Technical Implementation Guide #3*. Seattle: International Training & Education Center For Health. January 2010. Print.

would be invited to identify areas of learning they would like clarification around, and a new evaluation form would be given to them. In this case, the evaluation would be summative; measuring the merits of the program rather than the specific learning of each participant. As the University of Texas describes it, a summative evaluation is; “a study conducted at the end of an instructional program or program cycle to provide decision makers or potential consumers with judgments about the program's merit with a focus on making decisions about program continuation, termination, expansion or adoption.”<sup>2</sup>

Given the circumstances, this method is beneficial for two reasons. First, it is relatively simpler to administer, in that it doesn't require consistent measurement of participants' knowledge both prior to and following the course. Second, this alternate method will also address the issue of whether the poor evidence of participant learning was the result of the pre and post assessment tool, or the actual curriculum. It is my belief that data from the summative evaluation will indicate that the problem lied with the previous evaluation tool, and that the curriculum was effective in accomplishing the objectives it was designed for; namely that participants gained a deeper understanding of the redemptive reality of God's Kingdom, and walked away with a clear framework for holistic discipleship in the way of Christ.

### ***Designing a Summative Evaluation***

Following is the design of the summative evaluation I developed after completing the curriculum with the first test group:

Goals to be measured:

- will understand the redemptive reality of God's Kingdom more clearly
- will have a clear framework for holistic discipleship
- will understand and appreciate the dimensions of character growth to cultivate through the disciplined practice of following Christ in the Kingdom
- will feel ready to practice kingdom living more intentionally

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<sup>2</sup> University of Texas. *Instructional Assessment Resources: Glossary – Summative evaluation*. University of Texas. 22 Aug. 2010. <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/glossary.php>. Web. 2 September 2010.

Focus of Evaluation:

- Outcome/Summative Evaluation

Elements of the Curriculum to be evaluated:

- Teaching Methods
- Communicating expectations
- Active engagement
- Evaluation / Feedback to students
- Enthusiasm / Interest
- Variety of teaching styles
- Organization
- Content
- Cohesion
- Relevancy
- Clarity
- Application and resources
- Appropriate for audience/context

Types of Evaluation Questions:

- Process Questions
- Outcome Questions
- Implementation Questions
- Exploratory/Confirmatory Questions

Forms of Feedback:

- Rank Order Scaling
- The Likert Scale
- The Open-Ended Question
- The Demographic Question
- Post-pre Assessment
- Action Plan

***Developing the Evaluation Design***

The design of this subsequent summative evaluation is largely influenced by the lessons learned from the initial evaluation, which was a rudimentary pre and post assessment survey. The responses on the pre-assessment survey showed a general lack of knowledge or insight into the main topics of the course. At the other end, the post-assessment surveys revealed that a low level of knowledge was acquired in the course. However, many of the responses on the post- surveys,

as well as anecdotal reports, indicated the course had a high impact among the participants at the *affective* domain of learning. This led me to develop the subsequent evaluation in two ways.

First, it was important for the subsequent evaluation to give realistic weight to the level of knowledge participants gained from the course. One interesting article from a professional coach and psychologist raises the issue of the merit of measuring knowledge acquisition in a course evaluation. The author contends that, "...the evidence is quite clear [that the] the relationship between measures of what someone learns on a course and whether they apply that new knowledge back at work is extremely low (lower for instance than the relationship between how useful someone says a training course has been and whether they will apply their new knowledge back at work)."<sup>3</sup> The author suggests that if behavioral change is the intended outcome of the course (which in this case it is), then building *behavioral rehearsal* into the curriculum, and attending to the organizational climate "where there is explicit and implicit support for people applying new skills", is far more important.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately it was not feasible to revise the curriculum at the point when this concept of *behavioral rehearsal* was introduced in the research process. However the points raised by this practitioner did provide a good reference for ongoing learning, as well as in the short term help define more clearly the limits of the summative evaluation tool.

Another article suggests that the problem often lies with the pre and post-assessment method itself. These authors state that, "pretest-posttest comparison results may be an inaccurate assessment of instructional impact because participants may have limited knowledge at the beginning of a program that prevents them from accurately assessing baseline behaviors." If behavioral change is the intended outcome of the curriculum, and if certain knowledge is critical

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<sup>3</sup> Gillie, Tony. *Evaluation of Training: Ten recommendations drawn from the psychological literature*. Oxford: The Gillie Partnership Ltd, n.d. 4. Print.

<sup>4</sup> Gillie, *Evaluation of Training*, 5.

in enabling that change, the author suggests implementing what is called a 'post then pre' evaluation. The merit of this approach is explained in this way:

The "post-then-pre" design accounts for changes in learners' knowledge by allowing participants to first report present behaviors (post); and then rate how they perceived these same behaviors just before taking the course (then pre). The retrospective pretest at the end of the program is more accurate because it's answered in the same frame of reference as the posttest. Thus, the problem of what's called "response-shift bias" in self-report, pre-post designs is minimized.<sup>5</sup>

This presented a compelling argument for using a 'post then pre' method as the key tool in measuring how knowledge gained in the course changed the participants' perception of what elements of the content they saw as greatest importance for discipleship. At the same time, as mentioned it is important for the summative evaluation to focus clearly on the other dimensions of learning than the cognitive. The evaluation form will also allow for participants to identify what behavioral change they anticipate as a result of attending the course. This will help to determine to what extent the course motivated change among the participants.

Different types of evaluation questions will be used, as well as various forms of feedback. In this way, participants will have an opportunity to reflect on their experience of the course from more than one perspective. The types of evaluation questions were chosen based on the desired outcomes being a mix of cognitive learning and behavioral change, while the forms of feedback were chosen based on how appropriate they were in addressing the type of question being asked. The table below provides a visual 'map' of the different components.

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<sup>5</sup> Rockwell, S. Kay and Harriet Kohn, "Post-Then-Pre Evaluation." *Journal of Extension*. Volume 27, Number 2. Summer 1989. <http://www.joe.org/joe/1989summer/a5.php>. Web. 28 August 2010.



**Figure 5: 'Map' of the Summative Evaluation**

Elements of the Curriculum to be evaluated	Types of Evaluation Questions	Forms of Feedback
Teaching Method	-Process Questions -Implementation Questions	Likert Scale Action Plan Rank Order Scale Demographic Questions
Content	-Outcome Questions -Exploratory/Confirmatory Questions	Post-pre Self-assessment Open-ended Questions

See 'Appendix C', for the final version of the Summative Evaluation form.

### **Outcomes of the Summative Evaluation**

In 'Appendix D', the reader will find a summary of the summative evaluations from the three test groups. As a way of comparison, I provide the average response for each group, and an overall average between the three groups. I also record a sample of the written responses where participants were invited to make open-ended comments regarding the course.

### **Analysis of Outcomes**

#### ***Participants***

Interestingly enough, the ages within the group represented fairly well the overall demographic of their respective congregations. Group 1 (Trinity Church) were made up generally of middle-aged adults with family, the mean age of Group 2 (St. Anne's) was significantly older and were either widows and single adults with no children, while Group 3 (Jeremiah Community) was predominantly comprised of young adults. The more interesting information the participants

provided was their identification of how long they have been a 'Christian disciple'. The vast majority identified themselves to be disciples of 20 years or more –especially Group 3 who was comprised of mostly young adults! This will be examined in the light of other feedback. Of the twenty total participants, two did not identify themselves as being a Christian disciple.

### ***Content***

On average, participants in all three groups rated the content very positively, particularly Group 2 (St. Anne's). In this group it was clear the concepts were quite original to them, and stimulated new ideas regarding discipleship and ministry. The written comments further affirm the quality of the content, both in terms of relevancy and the level at which it was presented. The interesting information here was how the participants on average positively rated the level of knowledge at which the content was presented. I suggest here that the subsequent criticisms of 'too much content', and 'not enough time for discussion', is not a result of the material being difficult to cognitively understand, but rather speaks to its level of impact on the *affective* domain of the listeners and people's need to process its implications for how they actually perceive discipleship.

### ***Teaching Method***

Not surprisingly, the teaching method of the curriculum was not received as well by Group 3 (Jeremiah Community) as those representing the more traditional congregations. The Jeremiah Community has consciously shaped learning around community reflection and egalitarian leadership. Particularly at this stage of its community's growth, participants would be sensitive to the degree to which teaching involves a diversity of voices through open conversation. Knowing this to be the case (in fact something I myself instilled in the community!) I attempted to adapt my method to their particular culture of learning without becoming too inconsistent with the content being presented between groups. Based on the feedback, it might appear the course would be better suited to a more formal teaching environment than, say, an

informal small group setting. That being said, the feedback from Group 3 also reflects the relatively higher level of skill in teaching and ministry leadership among the participants than those in the other groups. They would naturally have a higher awareness of what constitutes effective teaching.

### ***Leadership***

What did surprise me, I must confess, was the very positive feedback regarding my leadership in the course, particularly from Group 3. As my previous comments allude to, despite their relatively young age this group is well traveled, fairly skilled, and generally express high expectations for ministry. Speaking subjectively, in light of their high expectations for ministry their rating for my time management skills seem a little generous! Overall, what it does speak to I believe, is that I had at the very early stages of the course shown a level of understanding of the content that enabled most participants to become comfortable with me leading the learning process, however critical they might be of some aspects of it.

This positive evaluation of my leadership also challenged my perception of needing to provide more knowledge than what may be necessary. Here the cyclical process of my own redemptive growth comes to the foreground, as I recognize again how my need to be seen as ‘competent’ actually becomes the limiting factor in practicing effective ministry. The affirmation in this evaluation gives me the permission to practice a ‘less is more’ approach to the teaching ministry. One theological question I could learn to ask when preparing for other teaching moments might be, ‘where am I allowing the Holy Spirit to show up in this lesson plan?’

### ***Expectations***

The lack of clear expectations expressed by the participants raises the issue of whether the title of the course is appropriate or not. Perhaps there might be a better way to capture the essence of the content so people would have a better idea of what would be discussed. It happened that I had a prior relationship with all the participants, which meant that most likely

people agreed to participate based on a general trust of whatever it is I would be presenting them. For the purpose of impacting a wider audience, however, perhaps the promotional aspect of the curriculum could be improved. The overall level of satisfaction in how I responded to participant comments and questions confirms their level of trust and confidence in my pastoral leadership.

The most important feedback with regard to their expectations, was whether they felt they understood the topic better as a result of participating in the course. Again, on average, there was a high level of satisfaction here, save from those from Group 3. The post-pre assessment, which is the next evaluation tool we will examine the results of, indicates that the meaning of their relatively low rating here has more to do with their prior familiarity with the topic than the issue of the course not being effective in teaching the content to them. Let us look now at the results of the post-pre assessment table.

### ***New Learning: Post-pre Assessment***

As alluded to earlier, the most interesting insight I found when looking at the evaluation feedback was the number of Group 3 participants who identified themselves as being disciples for 20 years or more. This meant that from an early age most of them had been nurtured in an active and growing faith environment. This can be confirmed, at least on the surface, by seeing how their responses to the post-pre assessment mapped out on the table. There were only four statements that participants in Group 3 indicated either a lack of understanding of, or appreciation for, prior to the course. Compare that to the other two groups, where there was considerably higher unfamiliarity of the content in every virtually every category. This confirms the self-perception of those in Group 3 of having extensive years of learning as disciples. On the other hand, it raises questions regarding the nature of discipleship those in the other groups have been taught or been practicing. What I am implying here, of course, is that the content presented in this curriculum reflects in depth biblical and philosophical analysis, which certainly in my experience discipleship in the North American church has not always been predicated upon.

The real encouraging sign in this post-pre assessment is the significant shift in a positive direction among *all* three groups regarding their attitude toward the notion of holistic discipleship. Note that participants indicate a lack of clarity around only four of the sixteen key statements relating to discipleship after completing the course, and only one participant indicates a lack of appreciation for any of the key statements made during the course. Overall, the table shows a very significant increase in recognition among participants that the content of the course is 'very important' for their discipleship. This suggests that, regardless of their prior level of familiarity with the ideas and concepts around holistic discipleship, the course itself instilled a much greater appreciation for how these concepts positively shape the Christian life. As I will address shortly, even though participants indicated they were not interested in learning more about the historical issues related to holistic discipleship, for instance, this table still indicates a high level of appreciation for having been taught it.

### ***Interest in Further Discussion***

As I just mentioned, there was clearly a lack of interest among participants to explore in any further depth the historical, and one could argue, theological issues pertaining to holistic discipleship and the kingdom of God. Based on the level of appreciation the participants expressed in the post-assessment, this could indicate a satisfaction that the amount of historical and theological context presented in the course was sufficient. Meanwhile, the practical issues of personal holistic discipleship proved to be of much higher interest among participants to explore further, particular with regard to the development of character. Based on the written comments, there seems to be recognition that the framework presented during the course really is designed to provide a basis for lifelong growth in the journey of Christian discipleship.

### **Recommendations for Application and Future Study**

Professors Powers and Cooper were incredibly insightful in integrating the idea of redemption in the developmental process in order to foster greater integrity of character among

leaders in today's North American church. The professors, furthermore, rightly identified personal transformation of others as the outcome of effective ministry. In light of this thesis-project, however, we are compelled to also take into account the more complex and challenging task of witnessing God's redemptive power in and through *all* creation. In his own inaugural address Jesus makes it very clear that, for those who would claim to follow him, the inclusion of every aspect of creation in our missional agenda is not an option. Therefore, authentic discipleship needs to be firmly rooted in a *holistic redemptive vision* for ministry in the world, otherwise we are simply truncating the gospel to fit within our own particular biases.

I attempted to address this challenge through the development of a curriculum that would provide a framework for disciples to engage such a vision at a practical level. The valuable feedback I received from participants through the summative evaluation, in particular, suggest that it was effectively designed and implemented. I am pleased that participants believe that the theological premise of this thesis-project merits further discussion, and that the concept of *holistic redemptive vision* for ministry does hold its own in light of the research provided in the preceding chapters. There was also a belief among participants that the curriculum is immediately applicable for ministry, with both the research and evaluation providing assurance to local pastors and teachers that the curriculum teaches a biblically grounded and logical framework for holistic discipleship

There is no doubt that the curriculum needs to be adapted to the particular learning environment. As facilitator, I had the benefit of having familiarity with participants in each of the groups prior to leading the course. I would suggest that a thorough pre-assessment of participants is important in determining the appropriate language, metaphors, and illustrations needed to relate the issues and concepts to the particular group. To suggest I presented the curriculum in the same way to each of the groups would be misleading. With all three groups, not just with Group 3, a distinct approach to the issues needed to be taken in order for the participants to recognize from the beginning both the relevance and importance of the curriculum. The evaluation revealed more

work can be done in contextualizing the material in order to effectively relate the key premise behind the concept of holistic discipleship to the particular theological and cultural biases of the participants.

### **Concluding Summary of Thesis-Project**

At the beginning of this thesis-project I first raised the problem of the lack of a clear definition for redemption in respect to it being a paradigm for ministry formation. The first major step in the thesis-project was to attempt to clarify the biblical meaning of the term. Through a thorough study of its various biblical contexts, it became clear that there was indeed much greater significance to redemption in ministry than merely, as I argued, the personal dimension which was being emphasized. In fact, according to the prophetic tradition of Scripture, which Jesus reinforced in his own teaching, our personal salvation is inextricably bound up in the redemption of all creation. This thesis-project, then, moved quickly to explore the implications the biblical notion of redemption has for ministry formation.

The first challenge that became apparent in developing a vision for biblical redemption, is recognizing that the Church's mission has, and continues to be, limited by our culturally biased viewpoints of God's purposes for the world. While Jesus centered his mission on God's promise to redeem all aspects of life, this thesis-project gave evidence of how the church in North America acts quite inconsistently with Christ's *modus operandi*. Much of this inconsistency, I argued, has to do with the church's lack of critical reflection on the true nature of the developmental process of discipleship. Discipleship has been usually regarded as largely a cognitive process of learning a system of thought and behavior that are acceptable norms for the Christian community. This approach, as was discussed, is problematic.

The problem is our cognitive paradigm is deeply influenced by the human cultural worldview. What we fail to take into account is the need for our own cultural worldviews to be redeemed as we critically engage with the reality of God's kingdom. This calls for a dynamic

developmental process that does not assume predictable systems of thought and behavior, but rather relies on cognitive *dissonance* - through the discipline of practicing the paradoxical teachings of Jesus. We learn, very quickly, that authentic discipleship in Christ is, at its heart, an ongoing response to *radical* (in the sense of taking us back to the 'root' of our being) grace as we are continually confronted with inherently systemic sin, and our deeper awareness of the need for holistic redemption gained from the transformative journey of following Jesus in the Kingdom. Here is where the idea of developing a *holistic redemptive vision* for discipleship became a key concept introduced in this thesis-project.

The practical component of this thesis-project was the development of a curriculum that would guide participants through the process of fostering this vision through a holistic developmental framework. The first dimension of growth, labeled 'commitment', underscores the belief that one's involvement in transformational ministry can only be sustained by the intimate knowledge of Christ's redemptive work in us *throughout* the developmental process. This is an important point to make, for even as this thesis-project sought to broaden the focus of discipleship to encompass the arena of social transformation, the whole process of character growth is centered firmly in the personal relationship to Jesus Christ. As Ched Myers, both a political activist and biblical scholar, remarked during a recent conversation with members of the recently formed Jeremiah missional Community in Toronto, "Those church movements who don't invite people to meet Jesus at the altar are missing the point."<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the *direction* of the discipleship journey is guided by Jesus' vision of the redemptive reign of God over all creation. Here the ongoing work of discerning the world around us, apart from our culturally conditioned biases, becomes critical. This dimension of growth involves developing our sense of conviction of the reality of God's redemptive reign, while learning to hold together the ethical tensions inherent in the Kingdom. At another

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<sup>6</sup> Myers, Ched. Personal interview. 14 Oct. 2010.



dimension of growth, this curriculum also provided insight into the distinctive characteristic of the Christian way of life - compassion. Authentic compassion is a willingness to 'suffer alongside' those broken and in despair. Not only that, Christians reveal the depth of Christ's presence in the world by their determination to get to the root of the cause of sin and evil by practicing critical social analysis, and being faithful to the 'dangerous memory' of Jesus' own sacrificial death in the face of oppression. It is here where we can recognize that the theology of redemption stated in this thesis-project clarifies both the poignancy *and* accessibility of the cross as the symbol of the Church's witness in the world.

The final dimension presented in the curriculum, 'character', is really a culmination of the previous stages of learning. Here participants were called to find the place, as Frederick Beuchner described it, where our passion meets the world's deepest hunger. Discerning where this intersect is in the complex landscape of our daily lives is not easy. This curriculum provided some guiding principles for disciples on how to 'live into' our SHAPE. This was emphasized as a critical area for ministry formation; much of the faith journey, as John Calvin long ago remarked, is about learning who are truly are in relation to God.<sup>7</sup>

The process, however, is not abstract. Our sense of character is forged through the trial and tribulations of seeking the kingdom of God on earth. And it is this kingdom of God which remains the ultimate goal of discipleship. Through this thesis-project I have come to appreciate that the real purpose of discipleship is to grow in the grace of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to *bear the fruit* of the kingdom of God in our lives. To the extent that we are faithful to that calling, the greatest honour of being regarded as a true friend of Jesus may be given to us.

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<sup>7</sup> Calvin, Jean. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans H. Beveridge. London: Oxford University, 1863. 160. Print.

### APPENDIX A: EXEGETICAL CHART - REDEMPTION

Redemption in the Old Testament			
Biblical Term	Definition	Key References	Meaning in Passage
‘פְּדוּיִם pəḏûyim’ (4 times)	<i>a ransom</i>	Numbers 3	Yahweh names price of redemption to be Levites as substitute for Israel’s firstborn
‘פָּדָה padah’ (46 times)	<i>to pay the cost of someone’s freedom; to pay a ransom</i>	Exodus	God identified as ‘kinsman-redeemer’ through liberation experience
		Numbers 18	Priests called to redeem firstborn of Israel at 5 shekels of silver
		Psalms 49, 107	Rescue from death, restoration of soul; redemption not just political but spiritual
‘גָּאַל gaal’ (67 times)	to act as ‘kinsman-redeemer’	Leviticus 25, 27	In the context of ‘Jubilee’, redemption is about restorative justice and renewal of human relationships to one another and to creation; God as ‘avenger’ of <u>all</u> unjustly treated
		Isaiah 41-49	God as <i>gracious</i> redeemer; Israel unable to save itself, brought back out of exile

### EXEGETICAL CHART – REDEMPTION (CONTINUED)

Redemption in the New Testament			
‘ἀγορά agora’ (7 times)	A market-place, for buying/selling, elections	Galatians 3,4	Christ being born ‘under the law’, becoming a ‘curse for us’, in order to redeem humanity from ‘curse of law’
		Revelation 5,14	The elect in heaven have been ransomed (redeemed), ‘by the blood of the Lamb’
λύω luo’	To loose any person/thing tied or fastened; to set free; to dissolve	Luke	Prophetic redemption of Israel from oppression
		Romans 8	‘Groan inwardly’ for redemption of physical creation
		Ephesians 1	Redeemed as heirs of heaven, adopted children of God, through Christ
		Hebrews 9	Eternally redeemed by perfect sacrifice of Christ

## APPENDIX B: CURRICULUM LESSON PLANS AND POWERPOINT SLIDES


Session One: "The Kingdom of God and Discipleship"

**Duration:** 2 hours


<b>Objectives:</b> -participants will know the outline of the curriculum and the desired outcomes -participants will gain a biblical understanding of 'redemption' and 'kingdom of God' -participants will appreciate the centrality of the kingdom of God for discipleship	
<b>Session Teaching Methods:</b> Lecture teaching Q&A Pre-assessment test group discussion video	<b>Materials:</b> Handout, 'Pre-assessment Survey' Powerpoint presentation Video, 'Hybels – the great admission' Video, 'Colson – holistic gospel'

Session Plan	
7:20 Pre-assessment	Have handouts on table with instructions on powerpoint and music in background
7:35 Introduction	-Introduction to course and its objectives -‘The Real Objective of Discipleship?’ Discussion
7:50 Church and Society through Modernity	Diagram – church through Modernity  Willard, the ‘Great Omission’  Discussion on Willard’s comments
8:20	BREAK
8:30 Dealing with our Blindspots	Two examples of ‘blindspots’ Video, Hybels and the ‘Great Admission’ Warren, the next Reformation
8:40 Biblical Holistic Redemptive Vision	Video, Charles Colson and Jesus’ holistic Gospel Discussion, Colson’s views Scripture as story of redemption Holistic Gospel, Jesus and Isaiah
9:20 The kingdom of God	What <i>kind</i> of Kingdom? Preview of next week, growing as disciples in the Kingdom
9:30 Dismissal	Closing prayer

Slide 1

**MADE  
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**


A series exploring grace, redemption,  
and Jesus' true vision for the kingdom of God.



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Slide 2

**What our learning will look like at the end...**

Participants:

- will **understand the redemptive reality of God's Kingdom** more clearly
- will have a clear **framework for holistic discipleship**
- will understand and appreciate the **dimensions of character growth** to cultivate through the disciplined practice of following Christ in the Kingdom
- will feel **ready to practice kingdom living** more intentionally



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Slide 3

**Which is our *real* objective as disciples?**

- To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth
- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society



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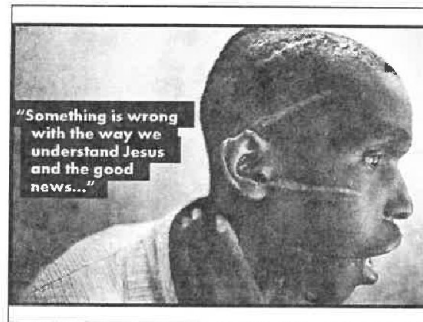
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Slide 4

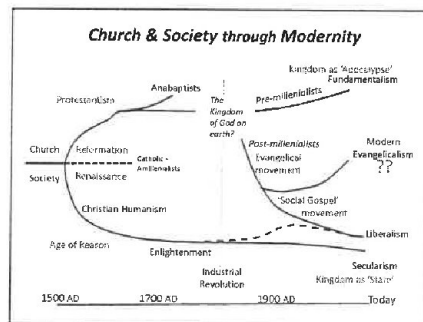
**Reactions to the 'list'...**

- "I dislike the idea of proselytism"
- "I don't see what world issues have to do with the Church's mission"

Slide 5



Slide 6



## Slide 7

## The Great Omission

"The overshadowing event of the past two centuries of Christian life has been the struggle between orthodoxy and modernism. In this struggle the primary issue has, as a matter of fact, not been discipleship to Christ and a transformation of soul that expresses itself in pervasive, routine obedience to his "all that I have commanded you." Instead, both sides of the controversy have focused almost entirely upon what is to be explicitly asserted or rejected as essential Christian doctrine. In the process of battles over views of Christ the Savior, *Christ the Teacher was lost on all sides.*"




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## Slide 8

## The Great Omission

"One could now be a Christian forever without actually changing in heart and life. Right profession, positive or negative, was all that was required. This has now produced generations of professing Christians who, as a whole, do not differ in character, but only in ritual, from their nonprofessing neighbors..."

*Dallas Willard, The Great Omission*




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## Slide 9

## Table Question

- In light of the historical context, what do you think of Willard's assessment of discipleship today?




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Slide 10

### Dealing with our Blindspots

#### On one side....

"I found those 2 000 verses on the poor. How did I miss that? I went to Bible college, two seminaries, and I got a doctorate. How did I miss God's compassion for the poor? I was not seeing all the purposes of God."

*Rick Warren, author of Purpose-Driven Life*




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Slide 11

### On the other side....

"The adolescent quest for passion reveals a theological aneurysm in mainline Protestantism... Teenagers are quick to point out the oxymoron in *passionless* Christianity... not only does a church without passion deform Christian theology, it inevitably extinguishes the fire behind Christian practice as well. In short, without passion, Christian faith collapses. And young people know it - which may be why most of them are not spending much time in church."

*Kenda Creasy Dean,*

Practicing Passion:

Youth and the quest for a passionate church




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Slide 12




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Slide 13



"I'm looking for a second reformation. The first reformation of the church 500 years ago was about beliefs. This one is going to be about behavior. The first one was about creeds. This one is going to be about deeds. It is not going to be about what does the church believe, but about what is the church doing."

*Rick Warren*

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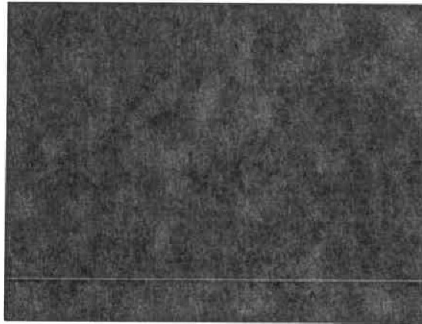
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Slide 14



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Slide 15

Table Questions

- According to Colson, what is Christianity?
- What is the 'gospel'?
- How did Colson portray God's work of redemption in the world? What illustrations did he offer? Do you see these as good examples?



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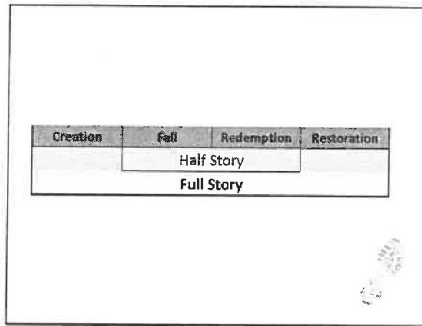
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Slide 16




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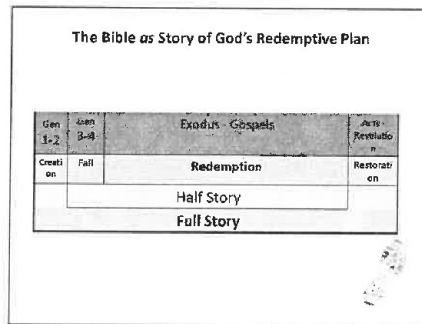
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Slide 17




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Slide 18

**Jesus' Holistic Gospel –  
Prophetic Affirmation of God's Redemptive Plan**

<p>Isa 61.1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. [Isa 58.6 'to set the oppressed free'] – He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the blind, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...</p> <p>8 ...In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.</p>	<p>Luke 4.18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.</p> <p>20 Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."</p>
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## Slide 19

**Jesus' Holistic Gospel –**  
Prophetic Affirmation of God's Redemptive Plan

Social! Political Physical Spiritual Ecological	Luke 4.18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.  20 Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."
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## Slide 20

**What kind of 'Kingdom'?**

1. *Universal*
  - 'basilea tou Theos' = 'rule of God' (vs. 'kingdom territory')
2. *Incarnational*
  - A 'grass-roots' movement of the Spirit
3. *Transformational*
  - A brand-new 'picture' using the old 'fragments of color'
4. *Eschatological*
  - 'mysterious', it will be 'more than we can imagine'!




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## Session Two: "Holistic Discipleship: Principles and Process for Growth in the Kingdom"


**Duration:** 2 hours

<b>Objectives:</b> -participants will know the basic principles and developmental process for discipleship in the Kingdom - identify the four dimensions of character growth in the kingdom -understand and appreciate the dimension of commitment in character growth, as our response to God's radical grace	
<b>Session Teaching Methods:</b> Lecture teaching Small group discussion Large group Q&A Video Worship liturgy	<b>Materials:</b> Powerpoint presentation Video, 'Ted and Gayle Haggard' Evening Prayer liturgy Handout, 'Holistic Discipleship Diagram'

Session Plan	
7:30 Prayer and meditation	Evening prayer and meditation on John 21.15-22?
7:50 Holistic Discipleship	-Definition of Discipleship, discussion -Principles of Developmental Process -three vital areas of holistic growth -four dimensions of character growth -Diagram of Holistic Discipleship
8:20	Break
8:30 Cultivating Commitment	-Roadblocks to Commitment -First step to Kingdom Living -Paul's encounter of Radical Grace -Discussion, Reflections on the Journey of Grace
9:10 Testament of Grace	-Video, Ted and Gayle Haggard -Discussion, the Challenge of Grace
9:30 Dismissal	-preview of Conviction and Compassion -closing prayer

Slide 1

**MADE  
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**



A series exploring grace, redemption, and Jesus' true vision for the kingdom of God.

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Slide 2

**Principles of Holistic Discipleship**

- ❖ **Discipleship is**
  - Growth in the grace of following Jesus in his mission of witnessing God's Reign in the world
- **The Process is...**
  - **Redemptive** – builds and flows out of our own encounter with Grace
  - **Cyclical** – always returning to deepen growth
  - **Hierarchical** – maturity is sustained by prior learning
  - **Sequential** – our life is a narration with meaning/purpose
  - **Experiential** – the learning is lived - not read about
  - **Interrelated** – growth in one area impacts another area




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
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Slide 3

**Three Vital Areas for Discipleship**

- ❖ **Community**
  - Everything related to how God builds up and sustains loving and peaceful relationships
  - The 'one-anothers' of the New Testament
- ❖ **Communion**
  - Represents those things related to intimate connection with God; prayer, worship, sabbath
- ❖ **Co-Mission**
  - Represents places where we intentionally participate (well or poorly!) in the work of redemption in the world, proclaiming good news to poor, binding up broken-hearted, healing/saving sick (body and soul), caring for creation, setting captives free.




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Slide 4

**Dimensions of Holistic Discipleship**

- ❖ **Commitment**
  - Being 'taken hold of' by the grace of Christ
- ❖ **Conviction**
  - Becoming aware of the holistic gospel, and inspired to live it as your life purpose
- ❖ **Compassion**
  - showing greater compassion to others, especially the least, the last, and the lost among us
- ❖ **Character**
  - Consistently revealing the characteristics of a sustained, growing, and redemptive disciple of Christ

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Slide 5

**Dimensions of Holistic Discipleship**

**Commitment**  
"Christ's love compels us" 2 Cor 5:14

**Conviction**  
"I have come to produce the kingdom" Lk 9:12

**Compassion**  
"Minister you did for one of the least of these" Matthew 25:40

**Character**  
"By their fruit you will know them" Matthew 7:16

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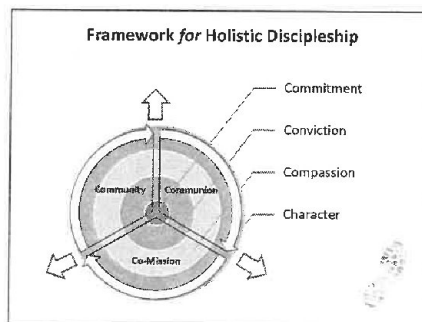
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Slide 6




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Slide 7

**First Dimension of Growth:  
Cultivating Commitment**

- **Roadblocks to Commitment:**
  - Fear
  - Indifference
- **First Step of Kingdom Living**
  - *Responding to Grace as the Call to Journey with Christ*




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Slide 8

**Paul's Encounter of Radical Grace**

**Galatians 1:13-16**

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age; for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. <sup>15</sup>But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being...




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Slide 9

**Paul's Encounter of Radical Grace**

**Philippians 3:4-11**

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup>Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup>More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.




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Slide 10

**Reflections on the Journey of Grace**

- What was the measure of Paul's commitment to Christ?
- What motivated this commitment?
- How does grace, as the starting point, redefine our journey as disciples of Christ?
- Have you had an experience of grace that resulted in committing, or re-committing, yourself to Christ?



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Slide 11




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Slide 12

**Discussing the Challenge of Grace**

Was there something that Ted or Gayle said which challenged you?

How did their testimony help you better understand the meaning of grace?

What light has it shed on the importance of affirming God's redemptive love in the Church? How can we affirm this more effectively?



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## Session Three: "Continuing through the Dimensions of Growth"

**Duration:** 2 hours


<b>Objectives:</b> -understand and appreciate the dimension of conviction in character growth, as discerning how to live in the tension of God's kingdom in this world -understand and appreciate the dimension of compassion in character growth, as solidarity through critical analysis and enduring sacrifice	
<b>Session Teaching Methods:</b> Lecture teaching Small group discussion Worship liturgy Q&A	<b>Materials:</b> Powerpoint presentation Handout – 'Living the Tension' Handout – 'social analysis in the Pastoral Circle' Holy communion liturgy and elements

Session Plan	
7:30 Introduction	-Discussion, "A recent event, circumstance, or person in which you hoped grace or redemption would be revealed" -review of developmental process of holistic discipleship -review of dimension of commitment in character growth
7:45 Cultivating Conviction	-significance of conviction; clarity and courage -Snyder's 'Model of the Kingdom' -Discussion, Living the Tension
8:15 Cultivating Compassion - <i>compassion</i>	-Compassion as the 'moral compass'  -Three elements of compassion; compassion, critical awareness, dangerous memory  -'compassion'; the heart to feel
8:25	Break
8:35 Cultivation Compassion – <i>critical awareness</i>	-'critical awareness'; the eyes to see -the Pastoral Circle -Social Analysis -Discussion, looking for signs of hope and redemption
8:55 Cultivating Compassion – <i>dangerous memory</i>	-Johann Baptist Metz, 'dangerous memory'; the mind to endure -Peter's epistle -liturgy as our 'living memory'
9:10 Meditation & Holy Communion	-meditation on Christ as Suffering Servant, Phil 2.1-11 -Holy Communion
9:30 Dismissal	-preview of Character

Slide 1

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Slide 2

**Second Dimension of Growth:  
Cultivating Conviction**

*"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of  
God...because that is why I was sent." Luke 4.43*

*"Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness."  
Mat 6.33*

*"I want to know Christ and the power of his  
resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his  
sufferings..." Phil 3.10*




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Slide 3

**Living the Tension of the Kingdom**





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Slide 4

**Living *the* Tension...**

- Choose one 'tension point' and argue its importance for shaping a Christian worldview.
- How does that particular element of the 'kingdom' worldview shape your daily life; how you act, what you say, your attitude toward the world?
- What is the danger of focusing just on that one element?




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Slide 5

**Third Dimension of Growth:**  
**Cultivating Compassion – *the* moral compass**

Three 'Elements' of Discernment:

- Compassion – *the heart to feel*
- Critical awareness – *the eyes to see*
- 'Dangerous Memory' – *the memory to endure*




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Slide 6

***i. Compassion***

**Jesus' heart for others**

"...a movement of the heart from oneself to the other. Our heart takes upon itself the suffering of the other. It is now more ours than the other person's. We stand in the place of the other, carrying the other's burden." *T.V. Philip*

*Compassion* = *com-* "together" + *pathos* "to suffer"  
*Sympathia* = "community of feeling"




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Slide 7

**ii. Critical Awareness**

"We are controlled by that of which we are  
unconscious."  
*Geraldine Smyth*




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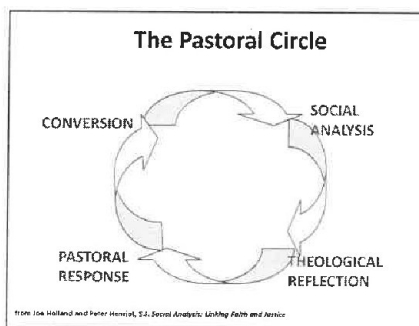
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Slide 8




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Slide 9

**Social Analysis: What are the Root Causes?**

- **Economic Factors:** Who owns what? Who controls? Who pays? Who gets? Who gets left out?
- **Political Factors:** Who decides? For whom do they decide? How do decisions get made? Who is left out of the process? Why?
- **Social Factors:** Who is left out? Who is included? Why?
- **Historic Factors:** What past events influence the situation today?
- **Cultural Factors:** What values are evident? What do people believe in? Who influences what people believe?
- **Personal Factors:** What is this person's life experiences? Their personal passions?
- **Spiritual Factors:** Where do we see God? Spiritual warfare? going here? principles and powers?

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Slide 10

**Eyes to See...**

- Going back to where you hoped to see grace or redemption be revealed, how does the Pastoral Circle help us see the possibility of a hope-filled pastoral response?
- In groups of three, choose one of your stories as a 'case study'

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Slide 11

**iii. Dangerous Memory**

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."

1 Peter 4.12-13




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Slide 12

**Liturgy as our Living Memory**

- Gathering
  - "...the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you"
  - We re-member ourselves as the body of Christ
- Proclamation
  - "The Gospel according to..."
  - We re-member God's story of redemption
- Eucharist
  - "Do this in remembrance of me..." 1 Cor 11.24
  - We re-member our salvation in Christ
- Sending
  - "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." In 20.21
  - We re-member our mission in Christ
  - To witness our hope in the Kingdom of God by living compassionately for the redemption of creation




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## Slide 13

"Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling  
what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin.  
It is the knowledge that there can never really be any  
peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally  
for you too."  
*Frederick Beuchner*



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## Session Four: "Life in the Kingdom: the Character of Christ"

**Duration:** 2 hours

Objectives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-understand and appreciate the dimension of character in mature growth, as sustained, growing, and redemptive ministry with Christ in the world</li> <li>-readiness to practice holistic discipleship</li> </ul>	
Session Teaching Methods:	Materials:
Lecture teaching	Powerpoint presentation
discussion	Handout, SHAPE diagram and Spiritual Gifts
summative evaluation	Handout, 'The Redemptive Way'
	Handout, 'Summative Evaluation Form'
	Handout, 'Kingdom Living – Dallas Willard'

Session Plan	
7:30 Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-review of conviction and compassion</li> <li>-agenda; cultivating character and summative evaluation</li> <li>-opening prayer</li> </ul>
7:40 Cultivating Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-John 14&amp;15, made to make a difference</li> <li>-three key characteristics of mature Christian; sustained, growing, redemptive</li> </ul>
7:55 Cultivating Character – <i>sustained</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Live in to your SHAPE; sustained life in Christ</li> <li>-diagram of SHAPE</li> <li>-Discussion, 'place where deep gladness and world's hunger meet'</li> <li>-Discussion, "a life experience that has fostered a passion God is, or can, use"</li> <li>-diagram of Spiritual Gifts</li> <li>-Discussion, "a spiritual gift God is, or can use, to bear the fruit of that passion"</li> </ul>
8:20	Break
8:30 Cultivating Character - <i>disciplined</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop Discipline; spiritual disciplines as 'holy habits'</li> <li>-Discussion, "making it count: holy habits in your life"</li> </ul>
8:50 Cultivating Character – <i>the redemptive way</i>	-Transforming Initiatives, Stassen and Gushee
9:05 Cultivating Character – <i>carry your cross</i>	-Cross a symbol of hope and redemption
9:10 Summative Evaluation	Handout, summative evaluation
9:30 Dismissal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-handout, 'kingdom living'</li> <li>-closing prayer</li> </ul>

Slide 1

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A series exploring grace, redemption,  
and Jesus' true vision for the kingdom of God.

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Slide 2

### Fourth Dimension of Growth: Cultivating Character

- i. 'Live Into' Your God-given SHAPE
  - i. Sustained life in Christ
- ii. Develop Discipline
  - i. Growing in the maturity of Christ
- iii. Carry your Cross
  - i. Embodying the redemptive nature of Christ

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Slide 3

### Your SHAPE

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Slide 4

***Spiritual Gifts***

• Prophecy	• Faith	• Tongue
• Leadership	• Helps	• Interpretation of Tongues
• Healing	• Administration	• Voluntary poverty
• Apostle	• Evangelist	• Martyrdom
• Service	• Pastor	• Exorcism
• Teaching	• Hospitality	• Intercession
• Exhortation	• Intercession	• Celibacy
• Giving	• Healing	
• Mercy	• Miracles	
• Wisdom	• Discerning of Spirits	
• Knowledge		

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Slide 5

***Made to make a Difference***

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."  
*Frederick Beuchner*

- What do you see happening in a place, or circumstance, where someone in their 'gladness' encounters the 'hunger' of someone else?
- What is 'redemptive' about this way of defining our vocation as followers of Christ?

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Slide 6

***Spiritual Disciplines help us...***

"...focus on the things of God if we remember that their purpose is to open up space in our lives to love God and others, and not to give us a set of rules to make us feel virtuous. Making rule the end instead of the means stops us from having the power of God in our lives."

"...connect intimately with Christ in ways that foster Christ-likeness and therefore help us to reach out in compassionate love and justice toward the lost and needy."

*Campolo and Darling*

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Slide 7

***Develop Discipline***

- Develop a set of 'holy habits'
- Commit yourself to the Church as the living Body
- Forget the pretense – the goal is to keep up with Jesus in the Kingdom




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Slide 8

***'Holy Habits'***

'Anything' can be a spiritual practice if it is done:

- intentionally
- over time with regularity
- with the goal of being formed into Christ-likeness
- with the result (*fruit*) of growing in love for God and others

(Campolo and Darling)




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Slide 9

***Develop 'Holy Habits'***

- Beware of 'spiritual blindspots'
- Engage in a variety of disciplines
- Be intentional about growing in all areas (Richard Foster):
  - Inward; meditation, prayer, fasting, study
  - Outward; simplicity, solitude, submission, service
  - Corporate; confession, worship, guidance, CELEBRATION




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Slide 10

### Making it Count

- What area of life do you usually prefer to focus on (communion, community, co-mission)?
- What 'holy habit' do you practice that enables you to remain aware of the presence of Christ's grace in your life?
- What area of life do you need to grow in? What are some different spiritual disciplines you can practice to help grow in that area?



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Slide 11

### The 'Redemptive Way'

Law-based Righteousness	Jesus' new teaching
<p><sup>21</sup>"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'</p>	<p><sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. <sup>23</sup>"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar... <sup>24</sup>Settle matters quickly with your adversary..."</p>



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Slide 12

The traditional law	The 'vicious cycle'	The 'redemptive way'
<p><sup>21</sup>"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'</p>	<p><sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.</p>	<p><sup>23</sup>"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there... go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>"Settle matters quickly with your adversary..."</p>



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## Slide 13

***Carry your Cross***

"Anyone who does not carry her cross and follow me  
cannot be my disciple."

*Luke 14.27*

- The way of the cross is sharing the burden of restoring a broken world (Heb. 'tikkun olam').
- Hope-filled walk; the *result* of the cross is resurrection!
- Our 'cross' stands where our passion meets the world's deepest need
- We learn how to carry the cross by courageously practicing the 'redemptive way' of Jesus



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## APPENDIX C: FINAL SUMMATIVE EVALUATION FORM

### Made to Make a Difference – Reflection and Evaluation Form

“The only man who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew every time he sees me, while all the rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.”

*George Bernard Shaw*

Some insight about You:

Your age?

18-24yrs      25-34yrs      35-44yrs      45-54yrs      55-64yrs      65+yrs

How long have you been a Christian disciple?

n/a      0-2yrs      3-5yrs      5-9yrs      10-15yrs      16-20yrs

20+yrs

How are you involved in ministry?

Congregational (salary *or* non-salary)

Non-profit/public (salary *or* non-salary)

business/private (self-employed *or* employed)

Not sure

Content

Rating scale: 1=low      3=medium      5=high

Topics relevant to the ministry of today's church?

1      2      3      4      5

Level of knowledge appropriate for those attending?

1      2      3      4      5

Content appropriate for this group?

1      2      3      4      5

Content original in that it presented new concepts and ideas?

1      2      3      4      5

Teaching Method

Sessions led in an organized fashion?

1      2      3      4      5

Enough time to process and engage the content?

1      2      3      4      5

Appropriate variety in the method of presentation?

1      2      3      4      5

Teaching methods effective for your learning?

1      2      3      4      5

Leadership

Please rate how effective you felt the one leading the course was:

Strong knowledge of topics

1      2      3      4      5

Clear and coherent presentation

1      2      3      4      5

Appropriate method and style of setting

1      2      3      4      5

Good time management/organization

1      2      3      4      5

Responded well to participant questions

1      2      3      4      5

Did you have expectations of what you wanted to learn in these sessions? If so, what were they?

Were your expectations met?

1      2      3      4      5

Overall, do you believe you understand the discussed topics better as a result of participating in the course?

1      2      3      4      5

Was there adequate feedback to your questions and comments to address your personal concerns or issues?

1      2      3      4      5

Were you enabled to reflect adequately enough on your learning to continue to apply it to your daily life?

1      2      3      4      5

Additional Comments:

## Application

### New Learning

Before I believed this statement was...					Statements made in these sessions relating to discipleship...	Now I believe this statement is...				
Very important		Not important		No insight		Not sure	Not important		Very important	
					The church had a distorted view of God's Kingdom through modernity					
					The Church's mission continues to be limited by our biased viewpoints					
					Jesus centered his mission on God's promise to redeem all aspects of life					
					Holistic discipleship is a dynamic developmental process					
					Discipleship is, at heart, an ongoing response to God's grace					

Before I believed this statement was...					Statements made in these sessions relating to discipleship...	Now I believe this statement is...				
Very important		Not important		No insight		Not sure		Not important		Very important
					"The primary reason Jesus calls us to servanthood is not just because other people need our service. It is because of what happens to us when we serve."					
					Discipleship is sustained by our conviction of God's redemptive reign					
					A 'holistic redemptive vision' is key to aligning my life with the Kingdom of God					
					Discipleship is guided by our compassion for others					
					Compassion needs to be practiced with critical analysis and 'dangerous memory' in order to be transformative					
					Discipleship is cultivating the character of Christ in all aspects of our daily life					
					Character can only be developed by the daily practice of Jesus' commands					
					Spiritual disciplines are any 'holy habits' that center us more fully in God's grace					
					Redemption is the restoration and transformation of all things through the grace of God					
					The kingdom of God is the ongoing manifestation of God's sovereign rule of redemptive love, made fully known in the person of Jesus Christ					
					The goal of discipleship is to grow in the grace of Christ, and power of the holy Spirit, in order to <i>bear the fruit</i> of the kingdom of God in our lives					

Try to identify one action you will do to grow in each of the following elements of discipleship in the Kingdom:

Commitment

Conviction

Compassion

Character

Rank each one separately in terms of your interest to discuss further:  
5 being highest and 0 being no interest

- ☐ Christian worldview through Modernity
- ☐ Views of Discipleship in Today's Church
- ☐ Biblical meaning of Redemption and the Kingdom of God
- ☐ Cultivating Commitment: receiving God's redemptive love
- ☐ Cultivating Conviction: developing a 'holistic redemptive vision'
- ☐ Cultivating Compassion: seeing the causes of hurt in the world
- ☐ Cultivating Character: practicing daily the life-changing way of Christ in the world

Overall, what do you feel were the strengths of these sessions?

How could the sessions be improved to better equip today's disciples?



## APPENDIX D: OUTCOMES OF SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

### *Profile of Participants*

Test Group 1 – Trinity Church					
18-24yrs	25-34yrs	35-44yrs	45-54yrs(3)	55-64yrs(2)	65+yrs (1)
How long have you been a Christian disciple?					
n/a	0-2yrs	3-5yrs(1)	5-9yrs	10-15yrs(1)	16-20yrs
20+yrs(3)					

Test Group 2 – St. Anne's					
18-24yrs	25-34yrs(1)	35-44yrs(1)	45-54yrs	55-64yrs(1)	65+yrs (3)
How long have you been a Christian disciple?					
n/a(2)	0-2yrs	3-5yrs	5-9yrs	10-15yrs(1)	16-20yrs 20+yrs(2)

Test Group 3 – Jeremiah Community					
18-24yrs(2)	25-34yrs(3)	35-44yrs(1)	45-54yrs	55-64yrs(2)	65+yrs
How long have you been a Christian disciple?					
n/a	0-2yrs	3-5yrs	5-9yrs	10-15yrs(1)	16-20yrs(1) 20+yrs(5)

### **Content**

Rating scale: 1=low      3=medium      5=high	TG1	TG2	TG3	
Topics relevant to the ministry of today's church?	5	5	4.6	T=4.8
Level of knowledge appropriate for those attending?	4.8	4.8	4.6	T=4.7
Content appropriate for this group?	4.8	4.8	4.7	T=4.7
Content original in that it presented new concepts and ideas?	4	5	4.1	T=4.3

### **Teaching Method**

	TG1	TG2	TG3	
Sessions led in an organized fashion?	4.6	4.6	4.1	T=4.4
Enough time to process and engage the content?	4.5	4.5	3.5	T=4.1
Appropriate variety in the method of presentation?	4.8	4.8	3.8	T=4.1
Teaching methods effective for your learning?	4.8	4.8	3.8	T=4.1

**Leadership**

	TG1	TG2	TG3	
Please rate how effective you felt the one leading the course was:				
Strong knowledge of topics	5	5	4.8	T=4.9
Clear and coherent presentation	4.8	4.8	4.5	T=4.6
Appropriate method and style of setting	4.8	4.8	4.2	T=4.6
Good time management/organization	4.6	4.6	3.7	T=4.3
Responded well to participant questions	5	5	4.3	T=4.7

**Expectations**

Did you have expectations of what you wanted to learn in these sessions? If so, what were they?

TG1:

“open minded”

“just to be amazed, and I was. Also to be reminded about what the kingdom of God is.”

“to have a better understanding of redemption, grace, and discipleship”

“to get a clearer picture of my part and my understanding of my part in living the kingdom life in the here and now”

TG2:

“how to reach out, work toward finding my calling/learn in general”

TG3:

“I didn’t have any expectations as the title sounded broad”

“It was much more helpful than I expected. I really enjoyed the content...it has the structure and language we need to have a community conversation.”

Were your expectations met?

TG1-4.2                      TG2-4.2                      TG3-4                      T=4

Overall, do you believe you understand the discussed topics better as a result of participating in the course?

TG1-4.6                      TG2-4.6                      TG3-3.8                      T=4.3

Was there adequate feedback to your questions and comments to address your personal concerns or issues?

TG1-5                      TG2-5                      TG3-4.1                      T=4.7

Were you enabled to reflect adequately enough on your learning to continue to apply it to your daily life?

TG1-5                      TG2-4.6                      TG3-3.1                      T=4.2

Additional Comments:

TG1:

“It’s a very meaty topic which probably could have used more time”

“a very insightful presentation that leaves you in thought.”

“ideas are very complex, and need to be more simply presented – through stories, very condensed material, crammed into too short a time frame. Can’t easily be absorbed.”

“after today yes. Some very important, critical questions and confusions I’ve had have been covered and I believe I have a clearer picture.”

TG2:

“new ideas given for living my faith”

“I think the ‘holy habits’ component could be longer”

TG3:

"it might be nice to extend the series to 6 weeks, for the opportunity to go deeper into some of the topics. There were so many rich ideas and interesting concepts, but felt that we only had time to scratch the surface. Definitely appreciate and valued the opportunity to share thoughts and experiences in pairs/threes."

"the material was well-presented and of high caliber, but did not necessarily connect with me."

"I would like to build on this both personally and as a faith community. Good ground work – not let's do it!"

"the time of reflection came outside the time allotted in session due to the shorter nature of the course"

### Application

(Each of the numbers in the table below indicate a participant's response to the statement in the middle of the row. The numbers correspond to which Test Group the participant was a part of, ie. '1' represents a person from Trinity church, '2' represents a person from St. Anne's, etc..This gives a good indication of the differences in responses both among and between groups.)

### New Learning

Before I believed this statement was...					Statements made in these sessions relating to discipleship...	Now I believe this statement is...				
Very important		Not important		No insight		Not sure	Not important		Very important	
3	333 3	133	2	112	The church had a distorted view of God's Kingdom through modernity			3	11333 3	2211 33
3	123 333 3	3		1112	The Church's mission continues to be limited by our biased viewpoints				32113 333	3211 123
	112 333 3	331		221	Jesus centered his mission on God's promise to redeem all aspects of life				32133 33	1211 1233
3	33	111 33		1122	Holistic discipleship is a dynamic developmental process				32313 33	2111 2123 3
3	111 233 33			122	Discipleship is, at heart, an ongoing response to God's grace				13233 3	3321 1112 23
1	133 33	332 1		22	"The primary reason Jesus calls us to servanthood is not just because other people need our service. It is because of what happens to us when we serve."			23	11333 333	1211 2

Before I believed this statement was...					Statements made in these sessions relating to discipleship...	Now I believe this statement is...				
Very important		Not important		No insight		Not sure	Not important		Very important	
23	333	333		122	Discipleship is sustained by our conviction of God's redemptive reign			3	13	3211 2112 23
2		133 3		11232	A 'holistic redemptive vision' is key to aligning my life with the Kingdom of God			3	13333	2212 2113 3
3	113 33	211 3		332	Discipleship is guided by our compassion for others			3	11323 3	2121 1333
		213	3	31322 1133	Compassion needs to be practiced with critical analysis and 'dangerous memory' in order to be transformative	23		3	31113 3	1232 3
33	113 123 33	3		22	Discipleship is cultivating the character of Christ in all aspects of our daily life				31132 3	3322 1112 13
	113 213 32	11		23	Character can only be developed by the daily practice of Jesus' commands			3	31233 3	3111 133
33	313 31	3	3	232	Spiritual disciplines are any 'holy habits' that center us more fully in God's grace			3	13123 133	1231 3
	111 333	312		1223	Redemption is the restoration and transformation of all things through the grace of God				11333 33	2112 1123
	111 313 33	32		122	The kingdom of God is the ongoing manifestation of God's sovereign rule of redemptive love, made fully known in the person of Jesus Christ				31333 3	1221 1212 3
313	311 123 333 3			2	The goal of discipleship is to grow in the grace of Christ, and power of the holy Spirit, in order to <i>bear the fruit</i> of the kingdom of God in our lives				13223	3321 2111 133

Rank each one separately in terms of your interest to discuss further:

5 being highest and 0 being no interest

___ Christian worldview through Modernity	TG1-1.3/TG2-4.2/TG3-2.2/T=2.5
___ Views of Discipleship in Today's Church	TG1-3.3/TG2-3.5/TG3-2.2/T=3
___ Theology of Redemption/Kingdom of God	TG1-4.1/TG2-4.2/TG3-3.6/T=3.9
___ Cultivating Commitment	TG1-4.6/TG2-4.6/TG3-3.7/T=4.3
___ Cultivating Conviction	TG1-4.5/TG2-4.8/TG3-4.4/T=4.5
___ Cultivating Compassion	TG1-4.6/TG2-4.6/TG3-4/T=4.4
___ Cultivating Character	TG1-4.8/TG2-4.6/TG3-4.5/T=4.6

Overall, what do you feel were the strengths of these sessions?

TG1:

"open our minds to critically looking at the way we, as the church, are working to remember to always step back and ask which Jesus are we following and if it's not the Jesus of the gospel, stop, regroup, and follow that Jesus."

"I think the course opened up a different world of God, redemption, grace, and the holistic kingdom. It was an opportunity to go deeper."

"sharing with others and receiving guidance"

"thoughtful quotes and lots of ideas to digest over time"

"review of church 'movements' in time and ways in current society to look at growing 'holistically'"

"inspiring us, and sending us out!"

"really appreciate the 'principles of holistic discipleship', how you related the examples...to each bullet"

TG2:

"It enlightened my ideas and helped to encourage in reading the bible more on a regular basis"

"provided a good introduction to the different aspects and elements of a holistic view of redemption"

"variety of material, conversation among group, passion, delivery"

"giving me tools to increase my understanding of living my faith"

TG3:

"The amount of content was excellent. The illustrations helped clarify difficult ideas"

"As is the norm in discussions facilitated by Lance, these sessions did a nice job accommodating the perspectives of people coming from a wide range of traditions and backgrounds. The discussions were very accessible, and quite relevant to participants regardless of profession, calling, or gifting."

"the teachings in these sessions were fantastic but was very rushed, it could have done with a few more weeks of time to fully delve into some of these topics."

"Leadership: I find Lance to be an excellent leader, teach and facilitator of groups."

"Group discussions: having all share a bit of our thoughts and experiences as they related to the topics. It helped us get to know each other better and to be inspired by others' journeys."

"Relevant topics: these are such important issues and topics for discussion for a community seeking to live out a missional life together."

"we need to do this again more slowly so that the Jeremiah community can speak a shared language and share concepts"

"I felt that the subject matter was appropriate for the group, though I did not necessarily connect with the material."

"thoughtful concepts – a lot of depth!"

"sharing in pairs of threes about our experiences or thoughts in regard to the content discussed, hearing about each other's journeys, the chance to apply the concepts to our actual lives and experiences."

How could the sessions be improved to better equip today's disciples?

TG1:

"simplify, reduce material presented"

"explain ideas more – is too deep, too fast to grasp ideas. Provide more time for sharing – to learn from one another"

"small groups...allow for personal sharing, more questions and sharing of insights – making it a very worthwhile process."

"maybe a homework assignment that we can report back about?"

“during the presentation provide small group discussion or have a small follow up group”

TG2:

“I don’t think anything could be added”

“more specific examples of being a disciples, send us some of the material via email so we can mull it over on our own”

“some of the elements were complex (multi-step)...some further simplification would help especially for those of us who are new to the church.”

“these sessions were excellent as introductions. A plan to develop the information here so people could delve deeper into each of these areas in further sessions would be appreciated. Perhaps, also, since so much information was provided in each session, it could be stretched into six to allow for a fuller understanding of each point made.”

TG3:

“add a few extra sessions so that the content can be more thoroughly discussed and thought through, it seemed like there was more great information than could be absorbed in such a small amount of time.”

“Way too much internal content to deal with adequately – no time to digest and reflect on the issues important to me – no time for discussion and feedback and interaction. I think the content, the work is vitally important – too important to rush!”

“more time and explanation of themes”

“content was excellent. Need more interactive processes to work with the material to make it our own. Facilitate group discussions with carefully crafted questions; encourage disagreement with one another, ie. differing opinions. Focus on content and community building. Getting to know and appreciate one another and content. Help group develop and use a shared language and shared understanding of the concepts. I would like to go through the material again in smaller chunks with different ways of working with the material.”

“I would have liked to end the group with a discussion about what is next? Where do we go from here as a community? Obviously discussions need more to be worked with but to get things started I think would have been helpful.”

“2-3 more sessions with some more time for whole group discussions”

“I feel like the sessions at time rushed – not enough time was allotted to unpacking and exploring certain points. A focus on a narrower range of subject matter would have the double bonus of allow more close examination of individual points, and more time for group discussion of each.”

“more time for break out discussion”

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## VITA

Lance Blair Dixon was born in Hawkesbury, Ontario, Canada on November 1, 1970, the second child of Rev. Canon Blair and Linda Dixon, and spent his early childhood in Detroit, Michigan. After graduating from H.B. Beal Secondary School in London, Ontario, Canada, he traveled to Africa before returning to studies a year later at Carleton University in Ottawa. Upon completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1993, he began seminary training at Wycliffe College, in the University of Toronto. In 1996 he completed a Master of Divinity degree, and while practicing parish ministry continued studies in Religious Education at St. Michael's Theological College, Toronto. After graduating from that program in 1998, he returned to Africa as a missionary teacher at a theological college in South Africa.

Settling back in Canada in 2000, he returned briefly to parish ministry, and taught for one year at the Toronto District Christian high school prior to accepting the position of associate pastor at Trinity Church, in Mississauga. He served this congregation for six years, mostly in the ministries of discipleship. In 2009 he returned to Toronto with his family to plant a new missional community in the west downtown area, called the Jeremiah Community. He enrolled in the Redemptive Leadership track of the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2007, and expects to graduate in May of 2011 at the Charlotte campus.